THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy AND Science Fiction

FEBRUARY

THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY

50¢

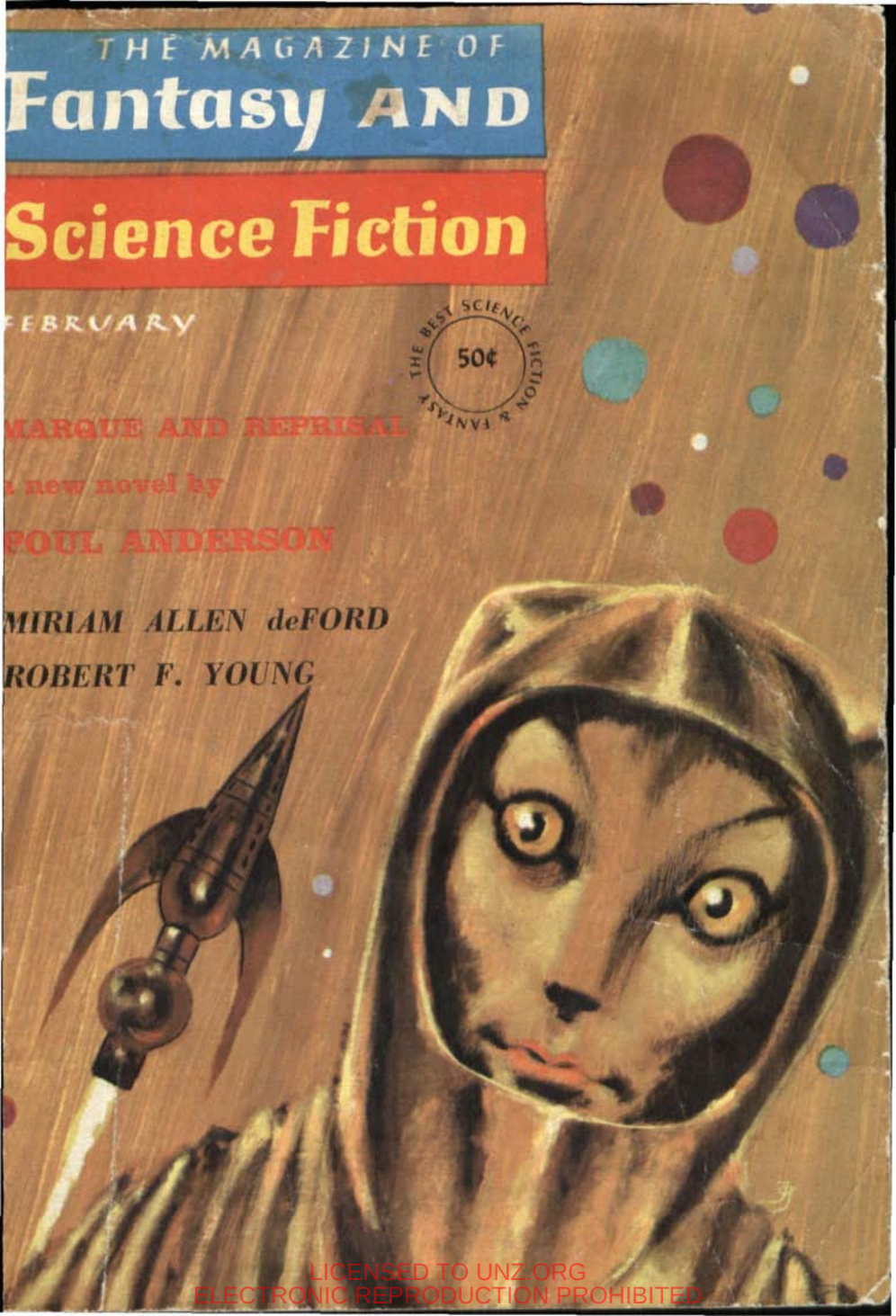
MARQUE AND REPRISAL

a new novel by

POUL ANDERSON

MIRIAM ALLEN deFORD

ROBERT F. YOUNG



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The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction

FEBRUARY *Including Venture Science Fiction*

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Cover by Jack Gaughan (illustrating "Marque and Reprisal")

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The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Volume 28, No. 2, Whole No. 165, Feb. 1965. Published monthly by Mercury Press, Inc., at 50¢ a copy. Annual subscription $5.00; $5.50 in Canada and the Pan American Union; $6.00 in all other countries. Publication office, 10 Ferry Street, Concord, N. H. Editorial and general mail should be sent to 347 East 53rd St., New York, N. Y. 10022. Second Class postage paid at Concord, N. H. Printed in U.S.A.

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In this issue

Ron Goulart suggested in last month's *Books* that **Poul Anderson** may someday be a generic term. We may indeed pity the reader of the future who moans that they don't write Poulandersons like they used to. Well, here's the "used to", a new novel by Mr. Anderson himself, with all the flavor and color and action of the original article. And for those who like more than one, two sequels to MARQUE AND REPRISAL have already been written especially for F&SF. The first is planned for our April issue. *Not* in this issue is the usual *Books* column. This is a temporary lapse, and next month's book reviews will be handled by **Judith Merril.**

Coming next month . . .

. . . is a novelet by **Roger Zelazny** (*A Rose For Ecclesiastes,* Nov. 1963). This one is a deep-sea fishing story. The seas are the seas of Venus, the fish is a Leviathan monster, the charter boat is a ten-square-block raft which rents for fifty thousand dollars a day, and the story is a big, brash thriller. Even if the biggest thing you've ever hooked into was a can of tuna, we guarantee that THE DOORS OF HIS FACE, THE LAMPS OF HIS MOUTH will leave at least a few beads of perspiration on your forehead—that is, if it doesn't leave you limp with exhaustion. And good news for those who have asked for more "People" stories by **Zenna Henderson.** Miss Henderson has obliged and a new novelet about the People has been scheduled for an upcoming issue.

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Here is the first sail of a three-vessel argosy, and ought properly to be celebrated with roasted oxen, horns of mead, and dancing in the public places of the port. It is our first Poul Anderson story since NO TRUCE WITH KINGS *(June 1963), and, while complete in itself, will be followed by two sequels. Poul Anderson was born in Pennsylvania in 1926; his somewhat unusual first name (vowel sound somewhere between "gull" and ghoul") derives from a Danish grandfather. "On the paternal side they seem to have been mostly sailors and such, though my father himself was an engineer; on the maternal side, professional people, including a couple of minor Romantic poets, Carsten Hauch and Henrik Hertz. At various times the family lived in Texas, Maryland, Europe, a Minnesota farm, etc. I took a physics degree at Minnesota, but drifted into writing and so, except for an interlude when times got lean, have only used the training to help get Science Fiction backgrounds straight. Since 1953 I've lived in the San Francisco Bay Area with my wife, Karen, and daughter, Astrid, with time out for occasional traveling. My brother beats me in that department; a few years ago he headed the first expedition into the Ellsworth Mountains in Antarctica. Besides Science Fiction, I've written mystery, historical, and nonfiction stuff." And now, off we go, with Gunnar Heim of Heimdal Motors, and his desperate and heroic adventurings with the distant world of New Europe and the alien and beautiful and utterly dangerous Aleriona.*

MARQUE AND REPRISAL

by Poul Anderson

Le roi fait battre tambour,
Le roi a fait battre tambour—"

Gunnar Heim halted in midstride. A while he stood, turning his head in search of the voice that had risen out of the dark.

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"Pour voir toutes ces dames.
Et la premiere qu'il a vue—"

It was some distance off, almost lost in the background of machine rumble to landward of the docks. But only one man was likely to be making his mock with that sinister old ballad, in San Francisco on this night.

Lui a ravi son ame.
Rataplan! Rataplan! Rataplan-plan-plan-plan!"

Heim started after the sound. He could still move fast and softly when he wanted to. In a moment his ears picked up the ring and snarl of a guitar played in anger.

"Rataplan! Rataplan! Rataplan-plan-plan-plan!"

Warehouses bulked black on his right. At this hour not very long before dawn, the city had dimmed; there was only a reddish haze above the roofs, and the remote luminous leap of the palace towers on Nob Hill. To the left a cargo submarine lay like a sleek moon-scaled dragon, but no longshore robots or men were at work around it. The Bay was ebony and a shimmer of glade. Kilometers distant, the hills on the eastern shore made a wall besprinkled with artificial stars. The real stars were wan, and so was the defense satellite that climbed rapidly into view—as if all suns had withdrawn from a planet gone strengthless. Luna stood at half phase near the zenith. He could not see the light-spot of Apollo City on the dark side, through the damp autumn air.

" 'Marquis, dis moi, la connais tu?
Marquis, dis moi, la connais tu?
Quelle est cette jolie dame?'
Et le marquis a repondu:
'Sire Roi, c'est ma famne.'
Rataplan! Rataplan! Rataplan-plan-plan-plan!
Rataplan! Rataplan! Rataplan-plan-plan-plan!"

Heim rounded a shed by the pier and saw the minstrel. He sat on a bollard, looking out across the water, a man more small and shabby than expected. His fingers leaped across the twelve strings as if attacking an enemy, and the moon gleamed off tears on his face.

Heim paused in the shadow of the wall. He ought not to interrupt. They had related, in the Spaceman's Rest, that the buck was drunk and wild. "And when he'd spent his last millo, he wanted to sing for booze," the bartender said. "I told him we didn't want none of that here. He said he'd sung his way through a dozen planets and what was wrong with Earth that nobody wanted to listen to him. I said the strip show was coming on the 3V in a minute and that's what the customers wanted, not any of his foreign stuff. So he yelled about singing to the stars or some such pothead notion. I told him go ahead, get

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out before I threw him out. And out he went. That was about an hour ago. Friend of yours?"

"Maybe," Heim said.

"Uh, you might go look for him then. He could get into trouble. Somebody might go for an expensive gutbucket like he was hauling."

Heim nodded and tossed off his beer. The Welfare section of any large city was bad to be alone in after nightfall. Even the police of Western countries made little effort to control those whom the machines had displaced before birth. They settled for containing that fury and futility in its own district, well away from the homes of those who had skills the world needed. On his walkabouts through the subculture of the irrelevant men, Heim carried a stun pistol. He had had use for it on occasion.

They knew him locally, though. He had told them he was a retired spaceman—anything nearer the truth would have been unwise—and before long he was accepted as a genial drinking or gambling companion, less odd than many of the floaters who drifted in and out of their indifferent purview. He waved at several acquaintances, some feral and some surrendered to hopelessness, and left the bar.

Since the minstrel had probably headed for the Embarcadero, Heim did too. His stride lengthened as he went. At first there had been no sense of mission about finding the fellow. It had merely been an excuse to go on yet another slumming trip. But the implications grew in his mind.

And now that his search was ended, the song caught at him and he felt his pulse accelerate. This stranger might indeed have the truth about that which had happened among yonder constellations.

"—La reine a fait faire un bouquet
De belles fleurs de lyse.
Et le senteur de ce bouquet
A fait mourir marquise."

As the older tale, also of tyranny, treachery, and death, crashed to its end, Heim reached a decision.

"Rataplan! Rataplan! Rataplan-plan-plan-plan!
Rataplan! Rataplan! Rataplan-plan-plan-plan!"

Silence followed, except for the lapping of water and the ceaseless throb of that machine which was the city. Heim trod forth.

"Good evening," he said.

The minstrel jerked where he sat, drew a ragged breath and twisted about. Heim spread his hands, smiling. "I'm harmless," he said. "Was just admiring your performance. Mind if I join you?"

The other wiped at his eyes, furiously. Then the thin sharp face steadied into a considering look. Gunnar Heim was not one you met unperturbed, in such an

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area. He was nigh two meters tall, with breadth to match. His features were blunt and plain, an old scar zigzagging across the brow, under reddish-brown hair that in this forty-sixth year of his age was peppered with gray. But he was decently clad, in the high-collared tunic and the trousers tucked into soft half-boots that were the current mode. The hood of his cloak was thrown back. His weapon did not show.

"Well—" The minstrel made a spastic shrug. "Here is a public place." His English was fluent, but bore a heavier accent than his French.

Heim took a flat bottle of whisky from his pocket. "Will you drink with me, sir?"

The minstrel snatched it. After the first swallow he gusted, "Ahhh!" Presently: "Forgive my bad manners. I needed that." He raised the flask. *"Isten eltesse,"* he toasted, drank again, and passed it back.

"Skaal." Heim took a gulp and settled himself on the wharf next to the bollard. What he had already drunk buzzed in him, together with a rising excitement. It was an effort to stay relaxed.

The minstrel came down to sit beside him. "You are not American, then?" he asked. His tone wavered a bit; he was obviously trying to make unemotional conversation while the tears dried on his high cheekbones.

"I am by naturalization," Heim said. "My parents were Norwegian. But I was born on Gea, Tau Ceti II."

"What?" The hoped-for eagerness sprang into the singer's countenance. He sat up straight. "You are a spaceman?"

"Navy, 'till about fifteen years ago. Gunnar Heim is my name."

"I . . . Endre Vadasz." The agile fingers disappeared in Heim's handshake. "Hungarian, but I have spent the last decade off Earth."

"Yes, I know," Heim said with care. "I saw you on a news program recently."

Vadasz's lips writhed. He spat off the dock.

"You didn't get a chance to say much during the interview," Heim angled.

"No. They were cautious to mute me. 'So you are a musician, Mr. Vadasz. You have worked your way by any means that came to hand, from star to star, bearing the songs of Mother Earth to the colonists and the nonhumans. *Isn't* that interesting!' " The guitar cried out under a stroke.

"And you wanted to tell about New Europe, and they kept steering you from the subject. I wondered why."

"The word had come to them. From your precious American authorities, under pressure from the big brave World Federation. It was too late to cancel my an-

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nounced appearance, but I was to be gagged." Vadasz threw back his head and laughed, a coyote barked under the moon. "Am I paranoid? Do I claim I am being persecuted? Yes. But what if the conspiracy against me is real? Then does my sanity or lunacy make any difference?"

"M-m-m." Heim rubbed his chin and throttled back the emotions within himself. He was not an impetuous man. "How can you be sure?"

"Quinn admitted it, when I reproached him afterward. He said he had been told the station might lose its license if it, ah, lent itself to allegations which might embarrass the Federation in this difficult time. Not that I was too surprised. I had had talks with officcials, both civil and military, since arriving on Earth. The kindest thing any one of them said was that I must be mistaken. But they had seen my proofs. They knew."

"Did you try the French? They'd be more likely to do something, I should think."

"Yes. In Paris I got no further than an assistant undersecretary. He was frightened of my story and would not refer me to anyone higher who might believe. I went on to Budapest, where I have kin. My father arranged for me to see the foreign minister himself. He was at least honest with me. New Europe was no concern of Hungary, which could in any event not go against the whole Federation. I left his office and walked for many hours. Finally I sat down in the dark by the Freedom Memorial. I looked at Imre Nagy's face, and it was only cold bronze. I looked at the figures of the martyrs, dying at his feet, and knew why no one will listen to me. So I got very drunk." Vadasz reached for the bottle. "I have been drunk most of the time since."

Now we ask him! it flared in Heim. His voice would not remain calm any longer; but Vadasz didn't notice. "Your story, I gather from what bits and pieces have leaked past this unofficial official censorship—your story is that the people are not dead on New Europe. Right?"

"Right, sir. They fled into the mountains, every one of them."

"The Haute Garance," Heim nodded. He had all he could do, merely to nod. "Good guerrilla country. Lots to cover, most never mapped, and you can live off the land."

"You have been there!" Vadasz set the bottle down and stared.

"Pretty often, while in the Navy. It was a favorite spot to put in for overhaul and planet leave. And then I spent four months in a stretch on New Europe by myself, recovering from this." Heim touched the mark on his forehead.

Vadasz peered close through the dappled moonlight. "Did the Aleriona do that to you?"

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"No. This was over twenty years ago. I bought it while we were putting down the Hindu-German trouble on Lilith, which you're probably too young to remember. The skirmishes with Alerion didn't begin till later." Heim spoke absently. For this moment the drive and ferocity in him were overlaid by—

Red roofs and steep narrow streets of Bonne Chance, winding down along the River Carsac to the Baie des Pecheurs, which lay purple and silver to the world's edge. Lazy days, drinking Pernod in a sidewalk cafe and lapping up the ruddy sunshine as a cat laps milk. When he got better, hunting trips into the highlands with Jacques Boussard and Toto Astier . . . good bucks, open of heart and hand, a little crazy as young men ought to be. Madelon—

He shook himself and asked roughly, "Do you know who is, or was, in charge?"

"A Colonel de Vigny of the planetary constabulary. He assumed command after the *mairie* was bombed, and organized the evacuation."

"Not old Robert de Vigny? My God! I knew him." Heim's fist clenched on the concrete. "Yes, in that case the war is still going on."

"It cannot last," Vadasz mumbled. "Given time, the Aleriona will hunt everyone down."

"I know the Aleriona too," Heim said.

He drew a long breath and looked at the stars. Not toward the sun Aurore. Across a hundred and fifty light-years, it would be lost to his eyes; and it lay in the Phoenix anyway, walled off from him by the heavy curve of Earth. But he could not look straight at the minstrel while he asked. "Did you meet one Madelon Dubois? That'd be her maiden name. I expect she's long married."

"No." Vadasz's drink-slurred voice became instantly clear and gentle. "I am sorry, but I did not."

"Well—" Heim forced a shrug. "The chances were way against it. There's supposed to be half a million people on New Europe. Were the . . . the casualties heavy?"

"I heard that Coeur d'Yvonne, down in Pays d'Or, was struck by a hydrogen missile. Otherwise—no, I do not believe so. The fighting was mostly in space, when the Aleriona fleet disposed of the few Federation Navy ships that happened to be near. Afterward they landed in force, but in uninhabited areas at first, so that except for a couple of raids with nothing worse than lasers and chemical bombs, the other towns had time to evacuate. They had been called on to surrender, of course, but de Vigny refused and so many went off with him that the rest came too."

Damn it, I have got to keep this impersonal. At least till I know more. "How did you escape? The

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newscasts that mentioned you when you first arrived were vague about it. Deliberately, I suppose."

Vadasz made the bottle gurgle. "I was there when the attack came," he said, thickly again. "The French commandeered a merchant vessel and sent it after help, but it was destroyed when scarcely above the atmosphere. There was also a miner in from Naqsa." He got the nonhuman pronunciation nearly right. "You may know that lately there has been an agreement, the Naqsans may dig in Terre du Sud for a royalty. So far off, they had seen nothing, knew nothing, and cloud cover above Garance would keep them ignorant. After a radio discussion, the Aleriona commander let them go, I daresay not wanting to antagonize two races at once. Of course, the ship was not allowed to take passengers. But I had earlier flitted down for a visit and won the captain's fancy—that a human should be interested in *his* songs, and even learn a few—so he smuggled me aboard and kept me hidden from the Aleriona inspectors. De Vigny thought I could carry his message—hee, hee!" Vadasz's laugh was close to hysteria. Fresh tears ran out of his eyes. "From Naqsa I had to, what you call, bum my way. It took time. And was all, all for nothing."

He laid the guitar across his knees, strummed, and sang low:

"'Adieu, ma mie, adieu, mon coeur,
Adieu, ma mie, adieu, mon coeur,
Adieu, mon esperance—"

Heim took the bottle, then abruptly set it down so hard that it clanked, jumped to his feet and began pacing. His shadow wove back and forth across the minstrel, his cloak fluttered against the moonlight on the water.

"*Nej, ved fanden!*" he exploded.

"Eh?" Vadasz blinked up at him.

"Look, do you say you have proof?"

"Yes. I have offered to testify under drugs. And de Vigny gave me letters, photographs, a whole microfilm packet with every bit of information he could scrape together. But no one on Earth will admit it is genuine. Few will even look at it."

"I will," Heim said. The blood roared in his ears.

"Good. Good. Right here, the package is." Vadasz fumbled in his soiled tunic.

"No, wait till later. I'll take your word for now. It fits in with every other scrap of fact I've come across."

"So I have convinced one man," Vadasz said bitterly.

"More than that." Heim drew a long breath. "Look, friend, with due respect for you—and I respect anyone who's had the guts to go out and make his own kind of life—I'm not a raggedy-ass self-

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appointed troubadour. I'm boss and chief owner of Heimdal."

"The muclear motor makers?" Vadasz shook his head, muzzily. "No. *Non. Nein. Nyet.* You would never be here. I have seen your motors as far from home as the Rigel Domain."

"Uh-huh. Damn good motors, aren't they? When I decided to settle on Earth, I studied the possibilities. Navy officers who've resigned their commissions and don't want to go into the merchant fleet have much too good a chance of ending down among the unemployables. But I saw that whoever was first to introduce the two-phase control system the Aleriona invented would lock gravs on the human market and half the non-human ones. And . . . I'd been there when Tech Intelligence dissected an Aleriona ship we captured in the set-to off Achernar. My father-in-law was willing to stake me. So today I'm—oh, not one of the financial giants. But I have ample money.

"Also, I've kept in touch with my Academy classmates. Some of them are admirals by now. They'll pay attention to my ideas. And I'm a pretty good contributor to the Libertarian Party, which means that Twyman will listen to me too. He'd better!"

"No." The dark tousled head moved from side to side, still drooping. "This cannot be. I cannot have found someone."

"Brother, you have." Heim slammed a fist into his palm with a revolver noise. A part of him wondered, briefly, at his own joy. Was it kindled by this confirmation that they were not dead on New Europe? Or the chance that he, Gunnar Heim, might personally short-circuit Alerion the damned? Or simply and suddenly a purpose, after five years without Connie? He realized now the emptiness of those years.

No matter. The glory mounted and mounted.

He bent down, scooped up the bottle with one hand and Vadasz with the other. *"Skaal!"* he shouted to Orion the Hunter, and drank a draught that made the smaller man gape. "Whoo-oo! Come along, Endre. I knew places where we can celebrate this as noisily as we damn please. We shall sing songs and tell tales and drink the moon down and the sun up and then we shall go to work. Right?"

"Y-yes—" Still dazed, Vadasz tucked his guitar under an arm and wobbled in Heim's wake. The bottle was not quite empty when Heim began *The Blue Landsknechts*, a song as full of doom and hell as he was. Vadasz hung the guitar from his neck and chorded. After that they got together on *La Marseillaise;* and *Die Beiden Grenadiere,* and *Skipper Bullard,* and about that time they had collected a fine bunch of roughneck companions, and all in

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all turned out to be quite an evening.

II

1700 hours in San Francisco was 2000 in Washington, but Harold Twyman, senior Senator from California and majority leader of United States representatives in the Parliament of the World Federation, was a busy man whose secretary could not arrange a sealed-call appointment any earlier on such short notice as Heim had given. However, that suited the latter quite well. It gave him time to recover from the previous night without excessive use of drugs, delegate the most pressing business at the Heimdal plant to the appropriate men, and study Vadasz's evidence. The Magyar was still asleep in a guestroom. His body had a lot of abuse to repair.

Shortly before 1700 Heim decided he was sufficiently familiar with the material Robert de Vigny had assembled. He clicked off the viewer, rubbed his eyes, and sighed. An assortment of aches still nibbled at him. Once—Lord, it didn't seem very long ago!—he could have weathered twenty times the bout he'd just been through, and made love to three or four girls, and been ready to ship out next morning. *I'm at the awkward age,* he thought wryly. *Too young for antisenescence treatment, too old for—what?*

Nothing, by Satan! I simply sit too much these days. Let me get away for a bit and this paunch I'm developing will melt off. He sucked in his stomach, reached for a pipe, and stuffed the bowl with unnecessary violence.

Why not take a vacation? he thought. Go into the woods and hunt; he had a standing invitation to use Ian McVeigh's game preserve in British Columbia. Or sail his catamaran to Hawaii. Or order out his interplanetary yacht, climb the Lunar Alps, tramp the Martian hills; Earth was so stinking cluttered. Or even book an interstellar passage. He hadn't seen his birthplace on Gea since his parents sent him back to Stavanger to get a proper education. Afterward there had been Greenland Academy, and the Deepspace Fleet, and Earth again, always too much to do.

Sharply before him the memory rose: Tau Ceti a ball of red gold in the sky; mountains coming down to the sea as they did in Norway, but the oceans of Gea were warm and green and haunted him with odors that had no human name; the Sindabans that were his boyhood playmates, laughing just like him as they all ran to the water and piled into a pirogue, raised the wingsail and leaped before the wind; campfire on an island, where flames sprang forth to pick daoda fronds and the slim furry bodies of his friends out of a night

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that sang; chants and drums and portentous ceremonies; and—and—*No.* Heim struck a light to his tobacco and puffed hard. *I was twelve years old when I left. And now Far and Mor are dead, and my Sindabans grown into an adulthood which humans are still trying to understand. I'd only find an isolated little scientific base, no different from two score that I've seen elsewhere. Time is a one-way lane.*

Besides—his gaze dropped to the micros on his desk—*there's work to do here.*

Footfalls clattered outside the study. Glad of any distracton, Heim rose and walked after them. He ended in the living room. His daughter had come home and flopped herself in a lounger.

"Hi, Lisa," he said. "How was school?"

"Yechy." She scowled and stuck out her tongue. "Old Espinosa said I gotta do my composition over again."

"Spelling, eh? Well, if you'd only buckle down and learn—"

"*Worse'n* correcting spelling. Though why they make such a fuss about that, *me* don't know! He says the semantics are upwhacked. Old pickleface!"

Heim leaned against the wall and wagged his pipestem at her. "'Semantics' is a singular, young'un. Your grammar's no better than your orthography. Also, trying to write, or talk, or think without knowing semantic principles is like trying to dance before you can walk. I'm afraid my sympathies are with Mr. Espinosa."

"But Dad!" she wailed. "You don't *realize!* I'd have to do the whole paper again from *go!*"

"Of course."

"I *can't!*" Her eyes, which were blue like his own—otherwise she was coming to look heartbreakingly like Connie—clouded up for a squall. "I got a date with *Dick*—Oh!" One hand went to her mouth.

"Dick? You mean Richard Woldberg?" Lisa shook her head wildly. "The blaze you don't," Heim growled. "I've told you damn often enough you're not to see that lout."

"Oh, Dad! J-j-just because—"

"I know. High spirits. I call it malicious mischief and a judge that Woldberg Senior bought, and I say any girl who associates with that crowd is going to get in trouble. Nothing so mild as pregnancy, either." Heim realized he was shouting. He put on his court-martial manner and rapped: "Simply making that date was not only disobedience but disloyalty. You went behind my back. Very well, you're confined to quarters for a week whenever you're not in school. And I expect to see your composition tomorrow, written right."

"I hate you!" Lisa screamed, flung out of the lounger and ran. For a second the bright dress, the slender body and soft brown hair,

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were before Heim's gaze, then she was gone. He heard her kick the door of her room, as if to make it open for her the faster.

What else could I do? he cried after her, but of course there was no reply. He prowled the long room, roared at a maid who dared come in with a question, and stalked forth to stand on the terrace among the roses, glaring across San Francisco.

The city lay cool and hazed under a lowering sun. From here, on Telegraph Hill, his view ranged widely over spires and elways, shining water and garden islands. That was why he had picked this suite, after Connie died in that senseless flyer smash and the Mendocino County house got too big and still. In the past year or so Lisa had begun to whine about the address being unfashionable. But the hell with her.

No. It was only that fourteen was a difficult age. It had to be only that. And without a mother— He probably should have remarried, for Lisa's sake. There'd been no lack of opportunity. But at most the affairs had ended as . . . affairs . . . because none of the women were Connie. Or even Madelon. Unless you counted Jocelyn Lawrie, but she was hopelessly lost in her damned peace movement and anyway—Still, he could well be making every mistake in the catalogue, trying to raise Lisa by himself. What ever had become of the small dimpled person to whom he was the center of the universe?

He glanced at his watch and swore. Past time to call Twyman.

Back in the study, he had a wait while the secretary contacted her boss and sealed the circuit. He couldn't sit, he paced the room, fingering his books, his desk computer, his souvenirs of the lancer to whose command he had risen. Hard had it been to give up *Star Fox*. For a year after his marriage, he'd remained in the Navy. But that wouldn't work out, wasn't fair to Connie. He stroked a hand across her picture, without daring to animate it right now. *Not hard after all, sweetheart. Well worth everything.*

The phone chimed and the secretary said, "The Senator is on the line, sir." Her image gave way to Twyman's distinguished gray head. Heim sat down, on the edge of the chair.

"Hello, Gunnar," Twyman smiled. "How's everything?"

"*Comme ci, comme ca,*" Heim answered. "A little more *ci* than *ca*, I think. How's with you?"

"Rushed damn near to escape velocity. The Aleriona crisis, you know."

"Uh-huh. That's what I wanted to talk about."

Twyman looked alarmed. "I can't say much."

"Why not?"

"Well . . . well, there really isn't much to say yet. Their delega-

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tion has only been here for about three weeks, you remember, so no formal discussions have commenced. Diplomacy between different species is always like that. Such a fantastic lot of spadework to do, information exchange, semantic and xenological and even epistemological studies to make, before the two sides can be halfway sure they're talking about the same subjects."

"Harry," said Heim, "I know as well as you do that's a string of guff. The informal conferences are going on right along. When Parliament meets with the Aleriona, you boys on the inside will have everything rigged in advance. Arguments marshalled, votes lined up, nothing left to do but pull the switch and let the machine ratify the decision you've already made."

"Well, ah, you can't expect, say, the Kenyan Empire representatives to understand something so complex—"

Heim rekindled his pipe. "What are you going to do, anyhow?" he asked.

"Sorry, I can't tell you."

"Why not? Isn't the Federation a 'democracy of states'? Doesn't its Constitution guarantee free access to information?"

"You'll have as much information as you want," Twyman snapped, "when we start to operate on an official basis."

"That'll be too late." Heim sighed. "Never mind. I can add two and two. You're going to let Alerion have New Europe, aren't you?"

"I can't—"

"You needn't. The indications are everywhere. Heads of state assuring their people there's no reason to panic, we're not going to have a war. Politicians and commentators denouncing the 'extremists.' Suppression of any evidence that there might be excellent reason to go to war."

Twyman bristled. "What do you mean?"

"I've met Endre Vadasz," Heim said.

"Who?—Oh, yes. That adventurer who claims—Look, Gunnar, there is some danger of war. I'm not denying that. France especially is up in arms, demonstrations, riots, mobs actually tearing down the Federation flag and trampling on it. We'll have our hands full as is, without letting some skizzy like him inflame passions worse."

"He's not a skizzy. Also, Alerion's whole past record bears him out. Ask any Navy man."

"Precisely." Twyman's voice grew urgent. "As we move into their sphere of interest, inevitably there've been more and more clashes. And can you blame them? They were cruising the Phoenix region when men were still huddled in caves. It's theirs."

"New Europe isn't. Men discovered and colonized it."

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"I know, I know. There are so many stars—The trouble is, we've been greedy. We've gone too far, too fast."

"There are a lot of stars," Heim agreed, "but not an awful lot of planets where men can live. We need 'em."

"So does Alerion."

"*Ja*? What use is a people-type world to them? And even on their own kind of planet, why didn't they ever colonize on anything like our scale, till we came along?"

"Response to our challenge," Twyman said. "What would you do if an alien culture started grabbine planetary systems as near to Sol as Aurore is to The Eith?" He leaned back. "Oh, don't get me wrong. The Aleriona are no saints. They've sometimes been fiends, by our standards. But we have to inhabit the same cosmos with them. War is unthinkable."

"Why?" drawled Heim.

"What? Gunnar, are you out of your brain? Haven't you read any history? Looked at the craters? Understood how close a call the Nuclear Exchange was?"

"So close a call that ever since the human race has been irrational on the subject," Heim said. "But I've seen some objective analyses. And even you must admit that the Exchange and its aftermath rid us of those ideological governments."

"An interstellar war could rid us of Earth!"

"Twaddle. A planet with space defenses like ours can't be attacked from space by any fleet now in existence. Every beam would be attenuated, every missile intercepted, every ship clobbered."

"That didn't work for New Europe," Twyman said. He was getting angry.

"No, of course not. New Europe didn't have any space fortresses or home fleet. Nothing but a few lancers and pursuers that happened to be in the vicinity—when Alerion's armada came."

"Don't be ridiculous, Gunnar. The affair was simply another clash, one that got out of hand."

"So the Aleriona say," Heim murmured. "If that's the truth, how come none, not one of our vessels escaped?"

Twyman ignored him. "We'll never be sure who fired the first shot. But we can be sure the Aleriona wouldn't have missiled New Europe if our commander hadn't tried to pull his ships down into atmosphere for a toadhole maneuver. What other conceivable reason was there?"

If New Europe really was missiled, Heim thought. *But it wasn't.*

The Senator checked indignation, sat silent for a bit, and went on almost mildly, "The whole episode illustrates how intolerable the situation has become, how matters are bound to escalate if we don't halt while we still can. And what do we want to fight for? A few wretched planets? We need only

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let Alerion's traditional sphere alone, and the rest of the galaxy is open to us. Fight for revenge? Well, you can't laugh off half a million dead human beings, but the fact remains that they are dead. I don't want to send any more lives after theirs."

"Okay," Heim said with equal quietness. "What do you figure to do?"

Twyman studied him before answering: "You're my friend as well as a political backstop. I can trust you to keep your mouth shut. And to support me, I think, once you know. Do I have your promise?"

"Of secrecy . . . well . . . yes. Support? That depends. Say on."

"The details are still being threshed out. But in general, Alerion offers us an indemnity for New Europe. A very sizeable one. They'll also buy out our other interests in the Phoenix. The exact terms have yet to be settled—obviously they can't pay in one lump—but the prospect looks good. With us out of their sphere, they'll recognize a similar one for humans around Sol, and keep away. But we aren't building any walls, you understand. We'll exchange ambassadors and cultural missions. A trade treaty will be negotiated in due time.

"There. Does that satisfy you?"

Heim looked into the eyes of a man he had once believed honest with himself, and said: "No."

"Why not?" Twyman asked most softly.

"From a long-range viewpoint, your scheme ignores the nature of Alerion. They aren't going to respect our sphere any longer than it takes them to consolidate the one you want to make them a present of. And I do mean a present—because until a trade treaty is agreed on, which I predict will be never, how can we spend any of that valuta they so generously pay over?"

"Gunnar, I know friends of yours have died at Aleriona hands. But it's given you a persecution complex."

"Trouble is, Harry," Heim stole from Vadasz, "the persecution happens to be real. You're the one living in a dream. You're so obsessed with avoiding war that you've forgotten every other consideration. Including honor."

"What do you mean by that?" Twyman demanded.

"New Europe was not missiled. The colonists are not dead. They've taken to the hills and are waiting for us to come help them."

"That isn't so!"

"I have the proof right here on my desk."

"You mean the documents that—that tramp forged?"

"They aren't forgeries. It can be proved. Signatures, fingerprints, photographs, the very isotope ratios in film made on New Europe. Harry, I never thought you'd sell

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out half a million human beings."

"I deny that I am doing so," Twyman said glacially. "You're a fanatic, *Mister* Heim, that's all. Even if it were true what you say . . . how do you propose to rescue anyone from a planet occupied and space-guarded? But it isn't true. I've spoken to survivors whom the Aleriona brought here. You must have seen them yourself on 3V. They witnessed the bombardment."

"Hm. You recall where they were from?"

"The Coeur d'Yvonne area. Everything else was wiped clean."

"So the Aleriona say," Heim retorted. "And doubtless the survivors believe it too. Any who didn't would've been weeded out during interrogation. I say that Coeur d'Yvonne was the only place hit by a nuke. I say further that we can fight if we must, and win. A space war only; I'm not talking the nonsense about 'attacking impregnable Alerion' which your tame commentators keep putting into the mouths of us 'extremists,' and Earth is every bit as impregnable. I say further that if we move fast, with our full strength, we probably won't have to fight. Alerion will crawfish. She isn't strong enough to take us on . . . yet. I say further and finally that if we let down those people out there who're trusting us, we'll deserve everything that Alerion will eventually do to us." He tamped his smoldering pipe. "That's my word, Senator."

Twyman said, trembling: "Then my word, Heim, is that we've outgrown your kind of sabertooth militarism and I'm not going to let us be dragged back to that level. If you're blaze enough to quote what I've told you, here in confidence, I'll destroy you. You'll be in the Welfare district, or correction, within a year."

"Oh, no," Heim said. "I keep my oaths. The public facts can speak for themselves. I need only point them out."

"Go ahead, if you want to waste your money and reputation. You'll be as big a laughingstock as the rest of the warhawk crowd."

Taken aback, Heim grimaced. In the past weeks, after the news of New Europe, he had seen what mass media did to those who spoke as he was now speaking. Those who were influential, that is, and therefore worth tearing down. Ordinary unpolitical people didn't matter. The pundits simply announced that World Opinion Demanded Peace. Having listened to a good many men, from engineers and physicists to spacehands and mechanics, voice their personal feelings, Heim doubted if world opinion was being correctly reported. But he couldn't see any way to prove that.

Conduct a poll, maybe? At best, the result would frighten some professors, who would be quick to

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assert that it was based on faulty statistics, and a number of their students, who would organize parades to denounce Heim the Monster.

Propaganda? Politicking? A Paul Revere Society?—Heim shook his head, blindly, and slumped.

Twyman's face softened. "I'm sorry about this, Gunnar," he said. "I'm still your friend, you know. Regardless of where your next campaign donation goes. Call on me any time." He hesitated, decided merely to add, "Goodbye," and switched off.

Heim reached into his desk for a bottle he kept there. As he took it forth, his gaze crossed the model of *Star Fox* which his crew had given him when he retired. It was cast in steel retrieved from that Aleriona battlewagon into which the lancer put an atomic torpedo at Achernar.

I wonder if the Aleriona make trophies of our wrecks.

Hm. Odd. I never thought about it before. We know so little of them. Heim put his feet on the desk and tilted the bottle to his lips. *Why don't I corner one of the Aleriona delegation and ask him?*

And then he choked on his drink, and spluttered, his feet thumped to the floor, and he never noticed. The thought had been too startling. *Why not?*

III

The ceiling glowed with the simulated light of a red dwarf sun, which lay like blood on leaves and vines and slowly writhing flowers. A bank of Terrestrial room instruments—phone, 3V, computer, vocascribe, infotrieve, service cubicle, environmental control board—stood in one corner of the jungle with a harsh incongruity. The silence was as deep as the purple shadows. Unmoving, Cynbe waited.

The decompression chamber finished its cycle and Gunnar Heim stepped out. Thin dry atmosphere raked his throat. Even so, the fragrances overwhelmed him. He could not tell which of them—sweet, acrid, pungent, musky—came from which of the plants growing from wall to wall, reaching to the ceiling and arching down again in a rush of steel-blue leaves, exploding in banks of tawny, crimson, black, and violet blossoms. The reduced gravity seemed to give a lightness to his head as well as his frame. Feathery turf felt like rubber underfoot. The place was tropically warm; he sensed the infrared baking his skin.

He stopped and peered about. Gradually his eyes adjusted to the ember illumination. They were slower to see details of shapes so foreign to Earth.

"*Imbiac dystra?*" he called un-

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certainly. "My lord?" His voice was muffled in that tenuous air.

Cynbe ru Taren, Intellect Master of the Garden of War, fleet admiral, and military specialist of the Grand Commission of Negotiators, trod out from beneath his trees. "Well are you come, sir," he sang. "Understand you, then, the High Speech?"

Heim made the bowing Aleriona salute of a ranking individual to a different-but-equal. "No, my lord, I regret. Only a few phrases. It's a difficult language for any of my race to learn."

Cynbe's beautiful voice ranged a musical scale never invented by men. "Wish you a seat, Captain Heim? I can dial for refreshment."

"No, thank you," the human said, because he didn't care to lose whatever psychological advantage his height gave him, nor drink the wine of an enemy. Inwardly he was startled. *Captain* Heim? How much did Cynbe know?

There would have been ample time to make inquiries, in the couple of days since this audience was requested. But one couldn't guess how interested an Aleriona overlord was in a mere individual. Very possibly Heim's wish had been granted at Harold Twyman's urging, and for no other reason. The Senator was a strong believer in the value of discussion between opponents. *Any discussion. We may go down, but at least we'll go down talking.*

"I trust your trip hither was a pleasant one?" Cynbe cantillated.

"Oh . . . all right, my lord, if, uh, one doesn't mind traveling with sealed eyelids after being thoroughly searched."

"Regrettable is this necessity to keep the whereabouts of our delegation secret," Cynbe agreed. "But your fanatics—" The last word was a tone-and-a-half glissando carrying more scorn than Heim would have believed possible.

"Yes." The man braced himself. "In your civilization, the populace is better . . . controlled." *I haven't quite the nerve to say "domesticated," but I hope he gets my meaning.*

Cynbe's laughter ran like springtime rain. "You are a marksman, Captain." He advanced with a movement that made cats look clumsy. "Would your desire be to walk my forest as we discuss? You are maychance not enrolled with the few humans who set ever a foot upon Alerion."

"No, my lord, I'm sorry to say I haven't had the pleasure. Yet."

Cynbe halted. For a moment, in the darkling night, they regarded each other. And Heim could only think how fair the Aleriona was.

The long-legged, slightly forward-leaning body, 150 centimeters tall, its chest as deep and waist a spare as a greyhound's, the counterbalancing tail never quite at rest, he admired in abstraction. How the sleek silvery fur sparkled

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with tiny points of light; how surely the three long toes of either digitigrade foot took possession of the ground; how graciously the arms gestured; how proudly the slim neck lifted. The humans were rare who could have dressed like Cynbe, in a one-piece garment of metallic mesh, trimmed at throat and wrists and ankles with polished copper. It revealed too much.

The head, though, was disturbing. For the fur ended at the throat, and Cynbe's face—marble-hued, eyes enormous below arching brows, nose small, lips vividly red, wide cheekbones and narrow chin—could almost have been a woman's. Not quite: there were differences of detail, and the perfection was inhuman. Down past the pointed ears, along the back and halfway to the end of the tail, rushed a man of hair, thick, silken fine, the color of honey and gold. A man who looked overly long at that face risked forgetting the body.

And the brain, Heim reminded himself.

A blink of nictitating membrane dimmed briefly the emerald of Cynbe's long-lashed feline eyes. Then he smiled, continued his advance, laid a hand on Heim's arm. Three double-jointed fingers and a thumb closed in a gentle grip. "Come," the Aleriona invited.

Heim went along, into the murk under the trees. "My lord," he said in a harshened tone, "I don't want to waste your time. Let's talk business."

"Be our doings as you choose, Captain." Cynbe's free hand stroked across a phosphorescent branch.

"I'm here on behalf of the New Europeans."

"For the mourned dead? We have repatriated the living, and indemnified they shall be."

"I mean those left alive on the planet. Which is nearly all of them."

"Ah-h-h-," Cynbe breathed.

"Senator Twyman must have warned you I'd bring the subject up."

"Truth. Yet assured he the allegation is unbelieved."

"Most of his side don't dare believe it. Those who do, don't dare admit it."

"Such accusations could imperil indeed the peace negotiations." Heim wasn't sure how much sardonicism lay in the remark. He stumbled on something unseen, cursed, and was glad to emerge from the bosquet, onto a little patch of lawn starred with flowers. Ahead rose the inner wall, where some hundred books were shelved, not only the tall narrow folios of Alrion but a good many ancient-looking Terrestrial ones. Heim couldn't make out the titles. Nor could he see far past the archway into the next room of the suite; but somewhere a fountain was splashing.

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He stopped, faced the other squarely, and said: "I have proof that New Europe was not scrubbed clean of men—in fact, they retreated into the mountains and are continuing resistance to your occupation force. The evidence is in a safe place—" *Goodness, aren't we melodramatic?*— "and I was planning to publicize it. Which would, as you say, be awkward for your conference."

He was rather desperately hoping that the Aleriona didn't know the facts of life on Earth well enough to understand how forlorn his threat was. Cynbe gave him no clue. There was only an imperturbable quirk of mouth, and: "Seeming is that you have decided upon another course, Captain."

"That depends on you," Heim answered. "If you'll repatriate those people also, I'll give you the evidence and say no more."

Cynbe turned to play with a vine. It curled about his hand and reached its blossoms toward his face. "Captain," he sang presently, "you are no fool. Let us assume your belief is truth. We shall speak of a folk in wrath under the mountain peaks. How shall they be made come to our ships?"

"They're fighting because they expect help. If representatives of the French government told them to return here, they would. The parley can be arranged by radio."

"But the entity France, now, would it so cooperate?"

"It'd have no choice. You know even better than I, a majority of the Federation doesn't want to fight over New Europe. About the only thing that could provoke such a war is the plight of the settlers. Let them come back unharmed and . . . and you'll have your damned conquest."

"Conceivable that is." Light rippled red down Cynbe's locks when he nodded. His gaze remained with the blooms. "But afterward?" he crooned. "Afterward?"

"I know," Heim said. "The New Europeans would be living proof you lied—not only about them, but about the entire battle. Proof that things didn't happen because someone got a trigger happy, but because you planned your attack." He swallowed a nasty taste. "Well, read Terrestrial history, my lord. You'll find we humans don't take these matters as seriously as we might. Lies are considered a normal part of diplomacy, and a few ships lost, a few men killed, are all in the day's work. If anything, this concession of yours will strengthen the peace party. 'Look,' they'll say, 'Alerion isn't so bad, you can do business with Alerion, our policies saved those lives and avoided an expensive war.' Unquote."

Now the muliebrile face did turn about, and for a while the eyes lay luminous upon Heim. He felt his pulse grow thick. The sound of the fountain seemed to

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dwindle and the hot red dusk to close in.

"Captain," Cynbe sang, almost too low to hear, "The Eith is an ancient sun. The Aleriona have been civilized for beyond a million of your years. We sought not farflung empire, that would crack an order old and stable; but our Wanderers ranged and our Intellects pondered. Maychance we are wiser in the manifold ways of destiny than some heedless newcomer. Maychance we have read your own inwardness more deeply than have you yourselves.

"'Afterward' did I say. The word carries another freight when echoed through a million of years. My regard was to no gain for a decade, a generation, a century. I speak beyond.

"Between these walls, let truth be what you have claimed. Then let truth also be that Alerion cannot hithersend five hundred thousand of individuals to leaven their race with anger.

"Had they yielded, the case were otherwise. We would have told Earth this battle was one more incident that tolerable and now we must have our own sphere where no aliens fare. But any of your colonists enwished to stay might do so, did they become subject to Alerion. We would offer inspection, that Earth might be sure they were not oppressed. For such little enclaves are significanceless; and Alerion has ways to integrate them into civilization: ways slow, as you look upon time, ways subtle, ways quite, quite certain.

"The colonists yielded not, I say between these walls. Even could we capture them alive, in so much wilderness—and we cannot—even then could they not become subject to Alerion. Not as prisoners, forever dangerous, forever an incitement that Earth deliver them. Yet if the entity of France commanded them home: in their nerves, that were betrayal of folk who had not surrendered, and they must strive for a Federation government of males more brave. I look in the future and I see how they shame the others of you—yes, yes, Captain, such intangibles make your history, you are that kind of animal. Truth, there would not be war to gain back Europe Neuve. Those bones grow dry before leaders as I speak of come to power. But when the next debatable issue arises—ah-h-h."

So there is to be a next issue, Heim thought. *Not that he's told me anything I hadn't already guessed. I wonder, though, when the second crisis is scheduled. Maybe not in my lifetime. But surely in Lisa's.*

His voice came out flat and remote, as if someone else spoke: "Then you're not going to admit the colonists are alive. What will you do? Hunt them down piecemeal?"

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"I command space fleets, Captain, not groundlings." Astonishingly, Cynbe's lashes fluttered and he looked down at his hands. The fingers twined together. "I have said more than needful, to you alone. But then, I am not Old Aleriona. My type was bred after the ships began their comings from Earth. And . . . I was at Achernar." He raised his eyes. "*Star Fox* captain, as Earth's men do, will you clasp my hand farewell?"

"No," said Heim. He turned on his heel and walked toward the compression chamber.

IV

His escort of Peace Control troopers unsealed his eyes and let him off the official flyer at Port Johnson in Delaware. They'd taken longer on whatever circuitous route they followed than he had expected. There was barely time to make his appointment with Coquelin. He hurried to the beltway headed for the civilian garages, elbowed aboard through the usual crowd, and found he must stand the whole distance.

Fury had faded during the hours he sat blind, exchanging banalities with the earnest young officer of his guards ("Weather Reg really muffed the last hurricane, don't you think?"—"Yes, too bad about New Europe, but still, we've outgrown things like imperialism and revenge, haven't we? Anyhow, the galaxy is big."—"I sure envy you, the way you've traveled in space. We get around in this job, of course, but seems like the places and people on Earth get more alike every year.") or thinking his own thoughts. He hadn't really expected to accomplish anything with the Aleriona. The attempt was nothing but a duty.

Grayness remained in him. *I don't see what I can do in Paris either.*

A shabby man pushed him, unnecessarily aggressive. He controlled his temper with an effort—he hated crowds—and refrained from pushing back. You couldn't blame the poor devil for being hostile to one whose good clothes revealed him a member of the technoaristocracy.

That's why we've got to move into space, he told himself for the thousandth time. *Room. A chance to get out of this horrible huddle on Earth, walk free, be our own men, try out new ways to live, work, think, create, wonder. There was more happiness on New Europe, divided among half a million people, than these ten billion could even imagine.*

What is it in them—fear? inertia? despair? plain old ignorance? —makes them swallow that crock about how the rest of the universe is open to us?

Because it was a crock. Habita-

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ble planets aren't that common. And most of those that exist have intelligent natives; a good many of the rest have already been colonized by others. Heim did not want his race forced to the nearly ultimate immorality of taking someone else's real estate away.

Though more was involved in the Phoenix affair. A loss of nerve; throughout history, yielding to an unjustifiable demand for the sake of a few more years of peace has been the first step on a long downward road. An admission of the essentially vicious principle of "interest spheres;" there should not be any boundaries in space. And, to be sure, appalling fatuity: a blank refusal to read the record which proved Alerion's intentions toward Earth, a positive eagerness to give the enemy the time and resources he needed to prepare for his next encroachment.

But what can a man do?

Heim claimed his flyer at the garage and fretted while TrafCon stalled about sending him aloft. Quite a time passed before the pattern of vehicle movement released him. He went on manual for a while, to have the satisfaction of personally getting away. The gravitors in this Moonraker were custom-built, with power to lift him far into the stratosphere. Otherwise the flyer was nothing special; he was fairly indifferent to creature comforts. He set the autopilot for Orly, took a long hot bath, got some whale from the freezer and made himself a 'burger for lunch, and bunked out for a couple of hours.

The clock woke him with the *Light Cavalry Overture* and handed him a mug of coffee. He changed into fresh clothes—somewhat formal, gold on the collar and down the pants—while the flyer slanted in for a landing. Momentarily he debated whether to go armed, for he would be carrying Vadasz's package. But no, that might start more argument than it was worth. If he failed here too, he doubted if there would be any further use for New Europe's appeal. No action would be possible, except to get roaring drunk and afterward consider emigration to an especially remote planet.

Entering the *Douane* office, he showed his ID and got a thirty-day permit. France, being less crowded than most countries, was rather stuffy about letting people in. But this official was balm and unguents from the moment he saw Heim's name. "Ah, yes, yes, monsieur, we 'ave been told to expect ce pleasure of your company. A car is waiting for you. Does monsieur 'ave any baggage 'e wishes carried? No? *Bien*, cis way, please, and 'ave a mos' pleasant visit."

Quite a contrast with what Endre Vadasz must have experienced. But he was only a musician of genius. Gunnar Heim headed a well-known manufacturing con-

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cern and was son-in-law to Curt Wingate, who sat on the board of General Nucleonics. If Gunnar Heim requested a private interview with Michel Coquelin, minister of extraterrestrial affairs and head of French representatives in the World Parliament, why, of course, of course.

Even so, he had crowded his schedule. Twyman had leaned backward to oblige him about seeing Cynbe; nevertheless, the peacemongers were fairly sure to have agents keeping tabs on him, and if he didn't move fast they might find ways to head him off.

The car entered Paris by ground. Blue dusk was deepening into night. The trees along the boulevards had turned their leaves, red and yellow splashed against Baron Haussmann's stately old walls or scrittling among the legs of pretty girls as they walked with their men. The outdoor cafes had little custom at this season. Heim was as glad of that. Paris could have made him remember too many things.

The car stopped at the Quai d'Orsay and let him out. He heard the Seine lap darkly against its embankment, under the thin chill wind. Otherwise the district was quiet, scant traffic, the whirr of the city machines nearly lost. But sky-glow hid the stars.

Gendarmes stood guard. Their faces were tense above the flapping capes. All France was tensed and bitter, one heard. Heim was conducted down long corridors where not a few people were working late, to Coquelin's office.

The minister laid aside a stack of papers and rose to greet him. "How do you do," he said. The tone was weary but the English flawless. That was luck; Heim's French had gotten creaky over the years. Coquelin gestured at a worn, comfortable old-style chair by his desk. "Please be seated. Would you like a cigar?"

"No, thanks. I'm a pipe man." Heim took his out.

"I too." Coquelin's face meshed in crow's feet and calipers when he smiled, sat down and began to load a still more disreputable briar. He was short but powerfully built, square of countenance, bald of dome, with very steady brown eyes. "Well, Mr. Heim, what can I do for you?"

"Uh . . . it concerns New Europe."

"I thought so." The smile died.

"In my opinion—" Heim decided he was being pompous. "M. Coquelin," he said, "I believe Earth ought to do whatever is necessary to get New Europe back."

Coquelin's look went over his guest's features, centimeter by centimeter, while he started his pipe. "Thank you for that," he said at length. "We have felt lonely in France."

"I have some material here that might help."

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The least intake of breath went through Coquelin's teeth. "Proceed, if you please."

He sat altogether expressionless, smoking, never glancing away, while Heim talked. Only once did he interrupt: "Cynbe? Ah, yes, I have met him. The one they have quartered at—No, best I not say. Officially I am not supposed to know. Go on."

In the end he opened the packet, slipped a few films into the viewer on his desk, read and nodded. The stillness quivered near breaking point. Heim puffed volcano-like, stared out the window into darkness, shifted his bulk so the chair groaned, and listened to his own heartbeat.

Finally Coquelin muttered, "There have rumors about this." After another silence: "I shall see that you and Vadasz join the Legion d'Honneur. Whatever happens."

"What will?" Heim asked. His jaws ached with being clamped together.

Coquelin shrugged. "Nothing probably," he said, dull-voiced. "They are determined to buy what they call peace."

"Oh. Yes, you'd know. So I can tell you I also know the plan."

"That Alerion shall have Europe Neuve? Good, we can speak freely. I am naturally honor bound not to reveal what is being decided until my fellow committeemen agree, and it would be a futile act with disastrous political consequences if I broke that promise. So I am most glad to have an outside listener." Coquelin passed a hand across his eyes. "But there is little we can say, no?"

"There's plenty!" Heim exclaimed. "Come the formal meeting, you can show this stuff to Parliament, with scientific proof it's genuine. You can ask them how anyone can hope to get re-elected that sold out so many humans."

"Yes, yes." Coquelin stared at his pipe bowl, where the fire waxed and waned, waxed and waned. "And some will say I lie. That my evidence is forged and my scientists bribed. Others will say alas, this is terrible, but—half a million people? Why, a few missiles striking population on Earth could kill twenty times that many, a hundred times; and we had no right to be in the Phoenix; and nothing matters except to make friends with Alerion, for otherwise we must look for decades of war; so we can only weep for our people out there, we cannot help them." His grin was dreadful to see. "I daresay a monument will be raised to them. Martyrs in the cause of peace."

"But this is ridiculous! Earth can't be attacked. Or if it can, then so can Alerion, and they won't provoke that when we have twice their strength. A single flotilla right now could drive them out of the Auroran System."

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"Half the Navy has been recalled for home defense. The other half is out in the Marches, keeping watch on the Aleriona fleet, which is also maneuvering there. Even some of the admirals I have consulted do not wish to spare a flotilla for Aurore. For as you must know, monsieur, the numbers available on either side are not large, when a single nuclear-armed vessel has so much destructive capability."

"So we do nothing?" Heim grated. "Why, at the moment even one ship could—could make serious trouble for the enemy. They can't have any great strength at Aurore as yet. But give them a year or two and they'll make New Europe as unattackable as Earth."

"I know." Coquelin swiveled around, rested elbows on desk and let his head sink between his shoulders. "I shall argue. But . . . tonight I feel old, Mr. Hiem."

"My God, sir! If the Federation won't act, how about France by herself?"

"Impossible. We cannot even negotiate as a single country with any extraterrestrial power, under the Constitution. We are not allowed any armed force, any machine of war, above the police level. Such is reserved for the Peace Control Authority."

"Yes, yes, yes—"

"In fact—" Coquelin glanced up. A muscle twitched in one cheek. "Now that I think about what you have brought me, these documents, I do not know if I should make them public."

"What?"

"Consider. France is furious enough. Let the whole truth be known; including the betrayal, and I dare not predict what might happen. It could well end with Peace Control troops occupying us. And, yes, that would hurt the Federation itself, even more than France. One must put loyalty to the Federation above anything else. Earth is too small for national sovereignty. Nuclear weapons are too powerful."

Heim looked at the bent head, and the rage in him seemed about to tear him apart. "I'd like to go out myself!" he shouted.

"That would be piracy."

"No . . . wait, wait, wait." The thought flamed into being. Heim sprang to his feet. "Privateers. Once upon a time there were privately owned warships."

"Eh, you have read a little history, I see." Some life came back to Coquelin. He sat straighter and watched the huge, restless figure with eyes again alert. "But I have read more. Privateering was outlawed in the nineteenth century. Even countries not signatory to that pact observed the prohibition, until it came to be regarded as a part of international law. Admitted, the Federal Constitution does not mention so archaic a matter. Still—"

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"Exactly!" Heim roared; or was it the demon that had come to birth in his skull?

"No, no, flout the law and the Peace Control forces arrive. I am too old and tired, me, to stand trial before the World Court. To say nothing of the practical difficulties. France cannot declare war by herself. France cannot produce nuclear weapons." Coquelin uttered a small sad chuckle. "I am a lawyer by past profession. If there was a, you say loophole?—I could perhaps squirm through. But here—"

Word by word, Heim said: "I can get hold of the weapons."

Coquelin leaped in his seat. *"Qu'est-ce que vous dites?"*

"Off Earth. I know a place. Don't you see—Alerion has to put space defenses in orbit around New Europe, or she can't hold it against any determined attack." Heim was leaning on the desk now, nose to nose with the other, talking like a machine gun. "New Europe has only a limited industry. So the Aleriona will have to bring most of the stuff from home. A long supply line. One commerce raider—What'd that do to their bargaining position? What'd it do for our own poor buffaloed people? *One ship!*"

"But I have told you—"

"You told me it was physically and legally impossible. I can prove the physical possibility. And you said you were a lawyer."

Coquelin rose too, went to the window and stared long out across the Seine. Heim's pace quivered the floor. His brain whirled with plans, data, angers, hopes, he had not been so seized by a power since he bestrode his bridge at Alpha Eridani.

And then Coquelin turned about. His whisper filled the silence: *"Peut-etre—"* and he went to the desk and began punching keys on an infotrieve.

"What are you after?" Heim demanded.

"Details of the time before quite every country had joined the Federation. The Moslem League did not recognize that it had any right as a whole to deal with them. So during the troubles, the Authority was charged with protecting Federation interests in Africa." Coquelin gave himself entirely to his work. Once, though, he met Heim's eyes. His own danced in his head. *"Mille remerciments, mon frere,"* he said. "It may be for no more than this night, but you have given me back my youth."

V

Endre Vadasz took the lid off the kettle, inhaled a sumptuous odor, gave the contents a stir, and re-covered them. "Almost done, this," he said. "I had better make the salad. Have you the materials ready?"

Lisa Heim blushed. "I . . . I'm afraid I'm not so good at slic-

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ing cucumbers and stuff," she said.

"Poof to that." Vadasz scooped the disorderly pile of greens into a bowl. "For a cadet, you do very well. —Find me the seasonings, will you? One must needs be an engineer to operate this damned machine shop you call a kitchen. —As I was saying, small one, when I so rudely interrupted myself, we shall yet win you to your cook and bottle washer (j.g.) rating. Charge, a boar's head erased with an apple gules in its mouth, field barry of six vert and or. That's for cabbage and clotted cream."

Lisa giggled and hopped onto the table, where she swung her legs and watched Vadasz with embarrassing warmth. He had only tried to be good company to his host's daughter while her father was away. He gave the herbs and spices more attention than was really necessary.

"My mother taught me a Spanish saying," he remarked, "that it takes four men to make a salad: a spendthrift for the oil, a philosopher for the seasonings, a miser for the vinegar, and a madman for the tossing."

Lisa giggled again. "You're cute."

"Er—here we go." Vadasz got to work, singing.

"There was a rich man and he lived in Jerusalem.
Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-de-rung!
He wore a top hat and his clothes were very spruce-iung.
Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-de-rung!
Hi-ro-de-rung! Hi-ro-de-rung!
Skinna-ma-rinky doodle doo, skinna-ma-rinky doodle doo,
Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-de-— rung!"

"Is that a real old song too?" Lisa asked when he paused for breath. He nodded. "I just love your songs," she said.

"Now outside his gate there sat a human wreckiung," Vadasz continued hastily.

"Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-de-rung!
He wore a bowler hat in a ring around his neckiung.
Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-de-rung!"

Lisa grabbed a skillet and spoon to beat out time as she joined him in the chorus.

"Hi-ro-de-rung! Hi-ro-de-rung!
Skinna-ma-rinky doodle doo, skinnama-rinky doodle doo,
Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-de-rung!

"He asked the rich man for a piece of bread and cheese-iung.
Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-de-rung!
The rich man said, 'I'll send for the police-iung.'
Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-de-rung!"

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"Hi-ro-de-rung! Hi-ro-de-rung!" chimed in a bull basso. Gunnar Heim stormed through the door.

"Skinna-ma-rinky doodle doo, skinna-ma-rinky doodle doo, ("Daddy!" "Gunnar!")

"Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-de-rung!" He snatched Lisa off the table, tossed her nearly to the ceiling, caught her and began to whirl her around the floor. Vadasz went merrily on. Heim took the chorus while he stamped out a measure with the girl, who squealed.

"Now the poor man died and his soul went to Heaviung.
Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-de-rung!
He danced with the angels till a quarter past eleviung.
Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-de-rung!
Hi-ro-deprung! Hi-ro-de-rung!
Skinna-ma-rinky doodle doo,
skinnama-rinky doodle doo,
Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-de-rung!"

"Oh, Daddy!" Lisa collapsed in a laughing fit.

"Welcome home," Vadasz said. "You timed yourself well."

"What's going on here, anyway?" Heim inquired. "Where are the servants? Why put a camp stove in a perfectly good kitchen?"

"Because machines are competent enough cooks but will never be chefs," Vadasz said. "I promised your daughter a goulash, not one of those lyophilized glue-stews but a genuine handmade *Gulyas* and sneeze-with-joy in the spices."

"Oh. Fine. Only I'd better get me—"

"Nothing. A Hungarian never sets the table with less than twice as much. You may, if you wish, contribute some red wine. So, once more, welcome home, and it is good to see you in this humor."

"With reason." Heim rubbed his great hands and smiled like a happy tiger. "Yes, indeedy."

"What have you done, Daddy?" Lisa asked.

"Fraid I can't tell you, *jente min*. Not for a while." He saw the first symptoms of mutiny, chucked her under the chin, and said, "It's for your own protection."

She stamped her foot. "I'm not a child, you know!"

"Come, now, come, now," interrupted Vadasz. "Let us not spoil the mood. Lisa, will you set a third place? We are eating in the high style, Gunnar, in your sunroom."

"Sure," she sighed. "If I can have the general intercom on, vid and audio both. Can I, Daddy?"

Heim chuckled, stepped out to the central control panel, and unlocked the switch that made it possible to activate any pickup in the apartment from any other room. Vadasz's voice drifted after him:

"Now the rich man died and he didn't fare so welliung.
Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-de-rung!

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He couldn't go to Heaven so he had to go to Helliung.
Glory, hallelujah—" and on to the end.

When he came back, he remarked in an undertone, because she'd be watching and listening, "Lisa doesn't want to miss a second of you, eh?"

The finely molded face turned doleful. "Gunnar, I didn't mean—"

"Oh, for crying in the beer!" Heim slapped Vadasz on the back. "You can't imagine how much I'd rather have her in orbit around you than some of that adolescent trash. Everything seems to be turning sunward for me."

The Magyar brightened. "I trust," he said, "this means you have found a particularly foul way to goosh our friends of Alerion."

"Shh!" Heim jerked a thumb at the intercom screen. "Let's see, what wine should I dial for your main course?"

"Hey, ha, this is quite a list. Are you running a hotel?"

"No, to be honest, my wife tried to educate me in viniology but never got far. I like the stuff but haven't much of a palate. So except when there's company, I stay with beer and whisky."

Lisa appeared in the screen. She laughed and sang,

"Now the Devil said, 'This is no hoteliung.
Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-derung!
This is just a plain and ordinary helliung.'
Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-derung!"

Vadasz put thumb to nose and waggled his fingers. She stuck out her tongue. They both grinned, neither so broadly as Heim.

And supper was a meal with more cheer, more sense of being home, than any he could remember since Connie died. Afterward he could not recall what was said—banter, mostly—it had not been real talk but a kind of embracement.

Lisa put the dishes in the service cubicle and retired demurely to bed; she even kissed her father. Heim and Vadasz went downramp to the study. He closed the door, took Scotch from a cabinet, ice and soda from a coldbox, poured, and raised his own glass.

Vadasz's clinked against it. "And a voice valedictory . . ." the minstrel toasted, "Who is for Victory?

"Who is for Liberty? Who goes home?"

"I'll drink to that," said Heim, and did, deeply. "Where's it from?"

"One G. K. Chesterton; a couple of centuries ago. You have not heard of him?—Ah, well, they no longer care for such unsophisticated things on Earth. Only in the colonies are men so naive as to think victories are possible."

"Maybe we can make 'em change their minds here, too."

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Heim sat down and reached for a pipe.

"Well," Vadasz said, in a cool tone but with a kind of shiver through his slim form, "now we come to business. What has happened, these last several days while I fretted about idle?"

"I'll begin from the beginning," Heim said. He felt no compunction about revealing what Twyman had admitted, when this listener could be trusted. His acquaintance with Vadasz, though brief, had been somewhat intense.

The Magyar wasn't surprised anyway. "I knew they had no intention to get New Europe back when none would hear me."

"I found a buck who would," Heim said, and went on with his account. As he finished, Vadasz's jaw fell with a nearly audible clank.

"A privateer, Gunnar? Are you serious?"

"Absodamnlutely. So's Coquelin, and several more we talked with." Heim's mirth had dissolved. He drew hard on his pipe, streamed the smoke out through dilated nostrils, and said:

"Here's the situation. One commerce raider in the Phoenix can make trouble out of all proportion to its capabilities. Besides disrupting schedules and plans, it ties up any number of warships, which either have to go hunt for it or else run convoy. As a result, the Aleriona force confronting ours in the Marches will be reduced below parity. So if then Earth gets tough, both in space and at the negotiations table—we shouldn't have to get very tough, you see, nothing so drastic that the peacemongers can scream too loud—one big naval push, while that raider is out there gobbling Aleriona ships—we can make them disgorge New Europe. Also give *us* some concessions for a change."

"It may be. It may be." Vadasz remained sober. "But how can you get a fighting craft?"

"Buy one and refit it. As for weapons, I'm going to dispatch a couple of trusty men soon, in a company speedster, to Staurn—you know the place?"

"I know of it. Ah-ha!" Vadasz snapped his fingers. His eyes began to glitter.

"Yep. That's where our ship will finish refitting. Then off for the Auroran System."

"But . . . will you not make yourself a pirate in the view of the law?"

"That's something which Coquelin is still working on. He says he thinks there may be a way to make everything legal and, at the same time, ram a spike right up the exhaust of Twyman and his giveaway gang. But it's a complicated problem. If the ship does have to fly the Jolly Roger, then Coquelin feels reasonably sure France has the right to try the crew, convict them, and pardon

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them. Of course, the boys might then have to stay in French territory, or leave Earth altogether for a colony—but they'll be millionaires, and New Europe would certainly give them a glorious reception."

Heim blew a smoke ring. "I haven't time to worry about that," he continued. "I'll simply have to bull ahead and try my chances on getting arrested. Because you'll understand how Coquelin and his allies in the French government—or in any government, because not every nation on Earth has gone hollowbelly—well, under the Constitution, no country can make warlike preparations. If we did get help from some official, that'd end every possibility of legalizing the operation. We'd better not even recruit our men from a single country, or from France at all.

"So it depends on me. I've got to find the ship, buy her, outfit her, supply her, sign on a crew, and get her off into space—all inside of two months, because that's when the formal talks between Parliament and the Aleriona delegation are scheduled to begin." He made a rueful face. "I'm going to forget what sleep's like."

"The crew— " Vadasz frowned. "A pretty problem, that. How many?"

"About a hundred, I'd say. Far more than needful, but the only way we can finance this venture is to take prizes, which means we'll need prize crews. Also . . . there may be casualties."

"I see. Wanted, a hundred skilled, reliable spacemen, Navy experience preferred, for the wildest gamble since Argelus went courting of Witch Helena. Where do you find them?—Hm, hm, I may know a place or two to look."

"I do myself. We can't recruit openly for a raider, you realize. If our true purpose isn't kept secret to the last millisecond, we'll be in the calaboose so fast that Einstein's ghost will return to haunt us. But I think, in the course of what looks like ordinary psych tests, I think we can probe attitudes and find out who can be trusted with the truth. Those are the ones we'll hire."

"First catch your rabbit," Vadasz said. "I mean find a psychologist who can be trusted!"

"Uh-huh. I'll get Wingate, my father-in-law, to co-opt one. He's a shrewd old rascal with tentacles everywhere, and if you think you and I are staticked about Alerion, you should listen to him for a while." Heim squinted at the model of *Star Fox,* shining across the room. "I don't believe ordinary crewmen will be too hard to find. When the Navy appropriation was cut, three years ago, a good many fellows found themselves thumb-twiddling on planet duty and resigned in disgust. We can locate those who came to Earth. But we may have trouble about a captain

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and a chief engineer. People with such qualifications don't drift free."

"Captain? What do you mean, Gunnar? You'll be captain."

"No." Heim's head wove heavily back and forth. A good deal of his bounce left him. "I'm afraid not. I want to—God, how I want to!—but, well, I've got to be sensible. Spaceships aren't cheap. Neither are supplies, and especially not weapons. My estimates tell me I'll have to liquidate all my available assets and probably hock everything else, to get that warship. Without me to tend the store, under those conditions, Heimdal might well fail. Lord knows there are enough competitors who'll do everything they can to make it fail. And Heimdal, well, that's something Connie and I built—her father staked us, but she worked the office and herself while I bossed the shop, those first few tough years. Heimdal's the only thing I've got to leave my daughter."

"I see." Vadasz spoke with compassion. "Also, she has no mother. You should not risk she lose her father too."

Heim nodded.

"You will forgive me, though, if I go?" Vadasz said.

"Oh, *ja, ja,* Endre, I'd be a swine to hold you back. You'll even have officer rank: chief steward, which means mainly that you oversee the cooking. And you'll bring me back some songs, won't you?"

Vadasz could not speak. He looked at his friend, chained to possessions and power, and there ran through his head

Now the moral of the story is
riches are no joke-iung.
Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-de-rung!
We'll all go to Heaven, for we
all are stony broke-iung.
Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-de-rung!

But the rhythm got into his blood, and he realized what Heim had done and what it meant, leaped to his feet and capered around the study shouting his victorious music aloud till the walls echoed.

"Hi-ro-de-rung! Hi-ro-de-rung!
Skinna-ma-rinky doodle doo,
skinna-ma-rinky doodle doo,
Glory, hallelujah, hi-ro-de-rung!"

VI

From WORLDWEEK:

31 October.

Gunnar Heim, principal owner of the American firm Heimdal Motors, has purchased the starship *Pass of Balmaha* from British Minerals, Ltd. The transaction astonished shipping circles by its speed. Heim made a cash offer that was too good to turn down but insisted on immediate occupancy.

He has announced that he plans to send an expedition in search of new worlds to colonize. "We seem to have lost out in the Phoenix," he

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told 3V interviewer John Phillips. "Frankly, I am shocked and disgusted that no action has been taken in response to Alerion's attack on New Europe. But I can't do much about it except try to find us some new place—which I hope we'll have the nerve to defend."

As large and powerful as a naval cruiser, Glasgow-built *Pass of Balmaha* was originally intended to prospect for ores. But no deposits were found sufficiently rich to pay the cost of interstellar shipment when the Solar System still has workable mines. The ship has therefore been in Earth orbit for the past four years. Sir Henry Sherwin, chairman of the board of British Minerals, told Phillips, "We're overjoyed to get rid of that white elephant, but I must confess I feel a bit guilty about it."

7 *November.*

U.S. Senator Harold Twyman (Libn., Calif.), high-ranking member of the Federal pre-formal negotiations team conferring with the delegation from Alerion, issued a statement Thursday denying rumors of a planned sell-out of New Europe.

"Certainly we are already talking business with them," he said. "And that, by the way, is a slow and difficult process. The Aleriona are alien to us, biologically and culturally. In the past we have had far too little contact with them, and far too much of what we did have was hostile. You don't get understanding out of a battle. Some of the finest xenologists on Earth are working day and night, trying to acquire a knowledge in depth that we should have gotten three decades ago.

"But we do know that the Aleriona share some things with mankind. They too are rational beings. They too wish to live. Their ancient civilization, which achieved a million years of stability, can teach us a great deal. And no doubt we can teach them something. Neither can do this, however, until we break the vicious circle of distrust, competition, fight, and retaliation.

"That's why the Deepspace Fleet has been ordered not to fire except in self-defense. That's why we aren't crowding the government of Alerion—if it *is* anything like what we understand by a government—to get out of the Auroran System. That's why we are taking our time with the honorable delegation: who, remember, came to us on Alerion's own initiative.

"Under the Constitution, only Parliament as a whole is empowered to negotiate with nonhuman states. Certainly the Executive Committee will observe this law. But you can't expect a body as large, diverse, and busy as Parliament to do the spadework in a case so intricate. Its duly appointed representatives were given that duty. We hope in a few more weeks to have a complete draft

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treaty ready for submission. At that time we shall be prepared to meet every conceivable objection to it. Meanwhile, however, it would be too great a handicap for us to operate in a glare of publicity.

"But we do not, repeat, not plan to betray any vital interest of the human race. Negotiation is a mutual process. We shall have to give a little as well as take a little. The Aleriona realize this too, perhaps better than some members of our own young and arrogant species. I am confident that, in the last analysis, all men of good will are going to agree that we have opened a new and hopeful era of cosmic history. The people of New Europe have not died in vain."

14 November.

Retired Vice Admiral Piet van Rinnekom, 68, was set upon by about twenty men as he neared his house in Amsterdam on Monday evening, and badly beaten. The assailants fled when police arrived, shouting taunts of "Warmonger!" They appeared to be of mixed nationality. Van Rinnekom has been an outspoken opponent of what he describes as "appeasement of Alerion," and is the author of the so-called Manhood Petition, whose backers are trying to gather one billion signatures in favor of Earth using force, if necessary, to regain New Europe. Most sociologists consider this sheer lunacy.

His condition is serious.

At his Chicago office, Dr. Jonas Yore, founder and president of World Militants for Peace, issued the following statement: "Naturally this organization regrets the incident and hopes for Admiral van Rinnekom's recovery. But let us be honest. He has only gotten a taste of the very violence he advocated. The issue before us is one of life and death. WMP stands for life. Unhappily, a great many uninformed people have let their emotions run away with them and are crying for blood with no thought of the consequences. WMP exists to fight this tendency, to fight for sanity, to give atavism its deathblow, by any means required. We make no threats. But let the militarists beware."

21 November.

Last Tuesday mankind throughout the Solar System watched an unprecedented event. Cynbe ru Taren, a member of the Aleriona delegeation to Earth, appeared on an official 3V broadcast and answered questions put to him by Crown Prince Umberto of Italy, who represented the World Federation.

The questions were selected from an estimated forty million sent in by people around the globe, with Cynbe choosing a dozen from the final list. As he remarked, with a grim humor he displayed throughout the interview, "Thirteen bears for you an unhappy freight. It numbered either that

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one who betrayed or that one who was slain."

In general, he repeated statements already made about the New Europe tragedy. How did it happen? "Our ships were on maneuvers. Near Aurore did they pass, for Alerion recognizes no other claim of sovereignty in the Phoenix. Maychance the Terrestrial chief believed this was attack, for truth is we had many. When fired on, we made response, with more than he may have awaited. His remnants entered atmosphere for an outflank with radiation protection. That it might save itself, our closest detachment launched weapons on multiple megatonnage. Grief, the settled fringe of that continent they named Pays d'Espoir was lineally beneath. At orbital height the warheads kindled a firestorm. Terrible it ran, from end to end of that coast. When we could land, we found none alive, and but few in the southern region where also a missile struck. Those we have hitherbrought, with our own mourning. Yet their Thirteenth-the-Betrayer was that captain who took them not into account when he plunged."

Why does Alerion now keep possession? "Naught but woe came ever from this intermingling. Time and again have humans ordered us from planets we discovered thousands of years agone, whose peace is now broken with machines and alien feet. And truth, we have often felt need to forbid places, even force them evacuated of the first few men. Races that knew us long grow latterly hostile to us, unrestful by what men have told and sold them. Resources we need are taken away. From such has come tension, which unseldom bursts in battle. Long past is that hour we should have ended it."

Why doesn't Alerion let an inspection team from Earth visit New Europe? "As we understand the symbolism of your culture, this were an admission of weakness and wrongness. Too, we cannot hazard espionage, or yet a suicide mission with nuclear bombs ensmuggled. I say never your Parliament would such plot, but you have individuals who are otherwise, some in high command. Maychance later, when faith has been achieved . . ."

28 November.

The Aleriona Craze, already well established in North America, gained so much momentum from delegate Cynbe ru Taren's recent 3V appearance that in the past week it has swept like a meteorite through the upper-class teenagers of most countries. Quite a few in Welfare have caught the fever too. Now girls blessed with naturally long blonde hair flaunt it past their sisters waiting in line to buy wigs and metal mesh jerkins—like their brothers. No disciplinary measure by parents or

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teachers seems able to stop the kids warbling every word they utter. You need earseals not to be assaulted by the minor key caterwaulings of *Alerion, Alerion* from radio, juke, and taper. The slithering Aleriona Ramble has driven even the Wiggle off the dance floors. On Friday the city of Los Angeles put an educational program on the big screen at La Brea Park, a rebroadcast of the historic interview; and police fought three hours to halt a riot of 5000 screaming highschoolers.

In an effort to learn whether this is a mere fad or a somewhat hysterical expression of the world's sincere desire for peace, our reporters talked with youngsters around the globe. Some quotes:

Lucy Thomas, 16, Minneapolis: "I'm just in hyperbolic orbit about him. I play the show back even when I'm asleep. Those eyes —they freeze you and melt you at the same time. Yee-ee!"

Pedro Fraga, 17, Buenos Aires: "They can't be male. I won't believe they are."

Machiko Ichikawa, 15, Tokyo: "The Samurai would have understood them. So much beauty, so much valor."

Simon Mbulu, 18, Nairobi: "Of course they frighten me. But that is part of the wonder."

In Paris, Georges de Roussy, 17, threatened surlily: "I don't know what's gotten into those young camels. But I'll tell you this. Anybody *we* saw in that costume would get her wig cut off, and her own hair with it."

No comment was available from the still hidden delegates.

5 December.

Lisa Heim, 14, daughter of manufacturer and would-be exploration entrepreneur Gunnar Heim of San Francisco, disappeared Wednesday. Efforts to trace her have so far been unsuccessful, and police fear she may have been kidnapped. Her father has posted a reward of one million American dollars for "anything that helps get her back. I'll go higher than this in ransom if I have to," he added.

VII

Uthg-a-K'thaq twisted his face downward as far as he could, which wasn't much, and pointed his four chemosensor tendrils directly at Heim. In this position the third eye on top of his head was visible to the man, aft of the blowhole. But it was the front eyes, on either side of those fleshy feelers, that swiveled their gray stare against him. A grunt emerged from the lipless gape of a mouth: "So war, you say. We 'rom Naqsa know lit-tle ow war."

Heim stepped back, for to a human nose the creature's breath stank of swamp. Even so, he must look upward; Uthg-a-K'thaq loomed eighteen centimeters over him. He wondered fleetingly if

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that was why there was so much prejudice against Naqsans.

The usual explanation was their overall appearance. Uthg-a-K'thaq suggested a dolphin of bilious green-spotted yellow, that had turned its tail into a pair of short fluke-footed legs. Lumps projecting under the blunt head acted as shoulders for arms that were incongruously anthropoid, if you overlooked their size and the swimming-membranes that ran from elbows to pelvis. Except for a purse hung from that narrowing in the body which indicated a sort of neck, he was naked, and grossly male. It wasn't nonhumanness as such that offended men, said the psychologists, rather those aspects which were parallel but different, like a dirty joke on Homo Sapiens. Smell, slobbering, belching, the sexual pattern—

But mainly they're also space travelers, prospectors, colonizers, freight carriers, merchants, who've given us stiff competition, Heim thought cynically.

That had never bothered him. The Naqsans were shrewd but on the average more ethical than men. Nor did he mind their looks; indeed, they were handsome if you considered them functionally. And their private lives were their own business. The fact remained, though, most humans would resent even having a Naqsan in the same ship, let alone serving under him. And . . . Dave Penoyer would be a competent captain, he had made lieutenant commander before he quit the Navy, but Heim wasn't sure he could be firm enough if trouble of that nasty sort broke out.

He dismissed worry and said, "Right. This is actually a raiding cruise. Are you still interested?"

"Yes. Hawe you worgotten that horriwle den you wound me in?"

Heim had not. Tracking rumors to their source, he had ended in a part of New York Welfare that appalled even him. A Naqsan stranded on Earth was virtually helpless. Uthg-a-K'thaq had shipped as technical adviser on a vessel from the planet men called Caliban, whose most advanced tribe had decided to get into the space game. Entering the Solar System, the inexperienced skipper collided with an asteroid and totalled his craft. Survivors were brought to Earth by the Navy, and the Calibanites sent home; but there was no direct trade with Naqsa and, in view of the crisis in the Phoenix where his world also lay, no hurry to repatriate Uthg-a-K'thaq. *Damnation, instead of fooling with those Aleriona bastards, Parliament ought to be working out a distressed spaceman covenant.*

Bluntly, Heim said, "We haven't any way of testing your mind in depth as we can for our own sort. I've got to trust your promise to keep quiet. I suppose you know that if you pass this information

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on, you'll probably get enough of a reward to buy a ride home."

Uthg-a-K'thaq burbled in his blowhole. Heim wasn't sure whether it represented laughter or indignation. "You hawe my word. Also, I am wothered awout Aerion. Good to strike at them. And, *suq*, will there not we loot to share?"

"Okay. You're hereby our chief engineer." *Because the ship has got to leave soon, and you're the only one I could get who knows how to repair a Mach Principle drive.* "Now for details—"

A maid's voice said over the intercom, which was set for one-way only: "Mail, sir."

Heim's heart shuddered, as it daily did. "Excuse me," he said. "I'll be back. Make yourself comfortable."

Uthg-a-K'thaq hissed something and settled his glabrous bulk on the study couch. Heim jogged out.

Vadasz sat in the living room, bottle to hand. He hadn't spoken much or sung a note in the past few days. The house was grown tomb silent. At first many came, police, friends, Curt Wingate and Harold Twyman arrived at the same hour and clasped hands, of everyone Heim knew well only Jocelyn Lawrie had remained unheard from; that was all a blur in his memory, he had continued preparations for the ship because there was nothing else to do and scarcely noticed when the visits stopped. Drugs kept him going. This morning he had observed his own gauntness in an optex with faint surprise—and complete indifference.

"Surely the same null," Vadasz mumbled.

Heim snatched the stack of envelopes off the table. A flat package lay on the bottom. He ripped the plastic off. Lisa's face looked forth.

His hands began to shake so badly that he had trouble punching the animator button. The lips that were Connie's opened. "Daddy," said the small voice. "Endre. I'm okay. I mean, they haven't hurt me. A woman stopped me when I was about to get on the elway home. She said her bra magnet had come loose and would I please help her fix it. I didn't think anybody upper-class was dangerous. She was dressed nice and talked nice and had a car there and everything. We got in the car and blanked the bubble. Then she shot me with a stunner. I woke up here. I don't know where it is, a suite of rooms, the windows are always blanked. Two women are staying with me. They aren't mean, they just won't let me go. They say it's for peace. Please do what they want." Her flat speech indicated she was doped with antiphobic. But suddenly herself broke through. "I'm so lonesome!" she cried.

The strip ended. After a long

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while Heim grew aware that Vadasz was urging him to read a note that had also been in the package. He managed to focus on the typescript.

"Mr. Heim:

For weeks you have lent your name and influence to the militarists. You have actually paid for advertisements making the false and inflammatory claim that there are survivors at large on New Europe. Now we have obtained information which suggests you may be plotting still more radical ways to disrupt the peace negotiations.

If this is true, mankind cannot allow it. For the sake of humanity, we cannot take the chance that it might be true.

Your daughter will be kept as a hostage for your good behavior until the treaty with Alerion has been concluded, and for as long thereafter as seems wise. If meanwhile you publicly admit you lied about New Europe, and do nothing else, she will be returned.

Needless to say, you are not to inform the police of this message. The peace movement has so many loyal supporters in so many places that we will know if you do. In that event, we will be forced to punish you through the girl. If on the other hand you behave yourself, you will continue to receive occasional word from her.

Yours for peace and sanity."

He had to read three or four times before it registered.

"San Francisco meter," Vadasz said. He crumpled the plastic and hurled it at the wall. "Not that that means anything."

"*Gud i himlen.*" Heim stumbled to a lounger, fell down and sat staring into the unspeakable. "Why don't they go straight after me?"

"They have done so," Vadasz answered.

"Personally!"

"You would be a risky target for violence. A young and trusting girl is easier."

Heim had a feeling that he was about to weep. But his eyes remained two coals in his skull. "What can we do?" he whispered.

"I don't know," Vadasz said like a robot. "So much depends on who they are. Obviously not anyone official. A government need only arrest you on some excuse."

"The Militants, then. Jonas Yore." Heim rose and walked toward the exit.

"Where are you going?" Vadasz grabbed his arm. It was like trying to halt a landslip.

"For a gun," Heim said, "and on to Chicago."

"No. Hold. Stop, you damned fool! What could you do except provoke them into killing her?"

Heim swayed and stood.

"Yore may or may not know about this," Vadasz said. "Certainly no one has definite information about your plans, or they would simply tip the Peace Control. The kidnappers could be in the lunatic

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fringe of the Militants. Emotions are running so high. And that sort must needs be dramatic, attack people in the street, steal your daughter, strut their dirty little egos—yes, Earth has many like them in the upper classes too, crazed with uselessness. Any cause will serve. 'Peace' is merely the fashionable one."

Heim returned to the bottle. He poured a drink, slopping much. *Lisa is alive,* he told himself. *Lisa is alive. Lisa is alive.* He tossed the liquor down his gullet. "How long will she be?" he screamed.

"Hey?"

"She's with fanatics. They'll still hate me, whatever happens. And they'll be afraid she can identify them. Endre, help me!"

"We have some time," Vadasz snapped. "Use it for something better than hysterics."

The glow in Heim's stomach spread outward. *I've been responsible for lives before,* he thought, and the old reflexes of command awoke. *You construct a games theoretical matrix and choose the course with smallest negative payoff.*

His brain began to move. "Thanks, Endre," he said.

"Could they be bluffing about spies in the police?" Vadasz wondered.

"I don't know, but the chance looks too big to take."

"Then . . . we cancel the expedition, renounce what we have said about New Europe, and hope?"

"That may be the only thing to do." It whirred in Heim's head. "Though I do believe it's wrong also, even to get Lisa home."

"What is left? To hit back? How? Maybe private detectives could search—"

"Over a whole planet? Oh, we can try them, but— No, I was fighting a fog till I got the idea of the raider, and now I'm back in the fog and I've got to get out again. Something definite, that they won't know about before too late. You were right, there's no sense in threatening Yore. Or even appealing to him, I guess. What matters to them is their cause. If we could go after *it*—"

Heim bellowed. Vadasz almost got knocked over in the big man's rush to the phone.

"What in blue hell, Gunnar?"

Heim unlocked a drawer and took out his private directory. It now included the unlisted number and scrambled code of Michel Coquelin's sealed circuit. And 0930 in California was—what? 1730?—in Paris. His fingers stabbed the buttons.

A confidential secretary appeared in the screen. *"Bureau de —oh, M. Heim."*

"Donnez-vous moi M. le Minister tout de suite, s'il vous plait." Despite the circumstances, Vadasz winced at what Heim thought was French.

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The secretary peered at the visage confronting him, sucked down a breath, and punched. Coquelin's weary features came to view.

"Gunnar! What is this? News of your girl?"

Heim told him. Coquelin turned gray. "Oh, no," he said. He had children of his own.

"Uh-huh," Heim said. "I see only one plausible way out. My crew's assembled now, a tough bunch of boys. And you know where Cynbe is."

"Are you crazy?" Coquelin stammered.

"Give me the details: location, how to get in, disposition of guards and alarms," Heim said. "I'll take it from there. If we fail, I won't implicate you. I'll save Lisa, or try to save her, by giving the kidnappers a choice: that I either cast discredit on them and their movement by spilling the whole cargo; or I get her back, tell the world I lied, and show remorse by killing myself. We can arrange matters so they know I'll go through with it."

"I cannot—I—"

"This is rough on you, Michel, I know," Heim said. "But if you can't help me, well, then I'm tied. I'll have to do exactly what they want. And half a million will die on New Europe."

Coquelin wet his lips, stiffened his back, and asked: "Suppose I tell you, Gunnar. What happens then?"

VIII

"Space yacht *Flutterby*, GB-327-RP, beaming George Town, Ascension Island. We are in distress. Come in, George Town. Come in, George Town."

The whistle of cloven air lifted toward a roar. Heat billowed through the forward shield. The bridge viewports seemed aflame and the radar screen had gone mad. Heim settled firmer into his harness and fought the pilot console.

"Garrison to *Flutterby*." The British voice was barely audible as maser waves struggled through the ionized air enveloping that steel meteorite. "We read you. Come in, *Flutterby*."

"Stand by for emergency landing," David Penoyer said. His yellow hair was plastered down with sweat. "Over."

"You can't land here. This island is temporarily restricted. Over." Static snarled around the words.

Engines sang aft. Force fields wove their four-dimensional dance through the gravitors. The internal compensators held steady, there was no sense of that deceleration which made the hull groan; but swiftly the boat lost speed, until thermal effect ceased. In the ports a vision of furnaces gave way to the immense curve of the South Atlantic. Clouds were scattered woolly above its shin-

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ingness The horizon line was a deep blue edging into space black.

"The deuce we can't," Penoyer said. "Over."

"What's wrong?" Reception was loud and clear this time.

"Something blew as we reached suborbital velocity. We've a hole in the tail and no steering pulses. Bloody little control from the main drive. I think we can set down on Ascension, but don't ask me where. Over."

"Ditch in the ocean and we'll send a boat. Over."

"Didn't you hear me, old chap? We're hulled. We'll sink like a stone. Might get out with spacesuits and life jackets, or might not. But however that goes, Lord Ponsonby won't be happy about losing a million pounds' worth of yacht. We've a legal right to save her if we can. Over."

"Well—hold on, I'll switch you to the captain's office—"

"Nix. No time. Don't worry. We won't risk crashing into Garrison. Our vector's aimed at the south side. We'll try for one of the plateaus. Will broadcast a signal for you to home on when we're down, which'll be in a few more ticks. Wish us luck. Over and out."

Penoyer snapped down the switch and turned to Heim. "Now we'd better be fast," he said above the thunders. "They'll scramble some armed flyers as soon as they don't hear from us."

Heim nodded. During those seconds of talk *Connie Girl* had shot the whole way. A wild dark landscape clawed up at her. His detectors registered metal and electricity, which must be at Cynbe's lair. Green Mountain lifted its misty head between him and the radars at George Town. He need no longer use only the main drive. *That* had been touch and go!

He cut the steering back in. The boat swerved through an arc that howled like a wolf. A tiny landing field carved from volcanic rock appeared in the viewports. He came down in a shattering blast of displaced air. Dust vomited skyward.

The jacks touched ground. He slapped the drive to Idle and threw off his harness. "Take over, Dave," he said, and pounded for the main airlock.

His score of men arrived with him, everyone spacesuited. Their weapons gleamed in the overhead illumination. He cursed the safety seal that made the lock open with such sadistic slowness. Afternoon light slanted through. He led the way, jumped off the ramp before it had finished extruding, and crouched in the settling dust.

There were three buildings across the field, as Coquelin had said: a fifteen-man barracks, a vehicle shed, and an environmental dome. The four sentries outside the latter held their guns in a stu-

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pefied fashion, only approximately pointed at him. The two men on a mobile GTA missile carrier gaped. George Town HQ had naturally phoned them not to shoot if they detected a spacecraft. The rest of the guard were pouring from quarters.

Heim counted. Some weren't in sight yet. . . . He lumbered toward them. "Emergency landing," he called. "I saw your field—"

The young man with Peace Control lieutenant's insignia, who must be in charge, looked dismayed. "But—" He stopped and fumbled at his collar.

Heim came near. "What's wrong?" he asked. "Why shouldn't I have used your field?"

That was a wicked question, he knew. Officially PCA didn't admit this place existed.

The Aleriona overlords who comprised the delegation could not be housed together. They never lived thus at home; to offer them less than total privacy would have been an insult, and perhaps risky of all their lives. So they must be scattered around Earth. Ascension was a good choice. Little was here nowadays except a small World Sea Police base. Comings and goings were thus discreet.

"Orders," the lieutenant said vaguely. He squinted at the argent spear of the yacht. "I say, you don't look damaged."

You could fake a name and registry for *Connie Girl,* but not unsoundness. The last couple of men emerged from barracks. Heim raised his arm and pointed. "On her other side," he said. He chopped his hand down and clashed his faceplate shut.

Two men in the airlock stepped back. The gas cannon they had hidden poked its nose out. Under fifty atmospheres of pressure, the anesthetic aerosol boiled forth.

A sentry opened fire. Heim dove for dirt. A bullet splintered rock before his eyes. The yellow stream gushed overhead, rumbling. And now his crew were on their way, with stunners asnicker. No lethal weapons; he'd hang before he killed humans doing their duty. But this was an attack by men who had seen combat against men whose only job had been to prevent it. Death wasn't needed.

The short, savage fight ended. Heim rose and made for the dome. Zucconi and Lupowitz came behind, a ram slung between them on a gravity carrier. Around the field, *Connie Girl*'s medical team started to check the fallen Peacemen and give first aid.

"Here," said Heim into his suit radio. Zucconi and Lupowitz set down the ram and started the motor. Five hundred kilos of tool steel bashed the dome wall at sixty cycles. The narcotics fog clamored with that noise. The wall smashed open. Heim leaped through, into the red sun's light.

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A dozen followed him. "He's somewhere in this mess," Heim said. "Scatter. We've got three minutes before the cops arrive."

He burst into the jungle at random. Branches snapped, vines shrank away, flowers crushed underfoot. A shadow flitted—Cynbe! Heim plunged.

A laser flame sizzled. Heim felt the heat, saw his combat breastplate vaporizing in coruscant fire. Then he was upon the Aleriona. He wrenched the gun loose. *Mustn't close in—he'd get burned on this hot metal.* Cynbe grinned with fury and whipped his tail around Heim's ankles. The man fell, but still he hung on. His followers arrived, seized their quarry, and frogmarched away the Intellect Master of the Garden of War. Outside, Cynbe took a breath of vapor and went limp.

I hope the biomeds are right about this stuff's being harmless to him, Heim thought.

He ran onto the field and had no more time for thought. A couple of PCA flyers were in the sky. They stooped like hawks. Their guns pursued Heim's crew. He saw the line of explosions stitch toward him, heard the crackle and an overhead whistle through his helmet. "Open out!" he yelled. His throat was afire. Sweat soaked his undergarments. "Let 'em see who you're toting!"

The flyers screamed about and climbed.

They'll try to disable my boat. If we can't get away fast—The ramp was ahead, hellroad steep. A squadron appeared over Green Mountain. Heim stopped at the bottom of the ramp. His men streamed past. Now Cynbe was aboard. Now everyone was. A flyer dove at him. He heard bullets sleet along the ramp at his heels.

Over the coaming! Someone dogged the lock. *Connie Girl* stood on her tail and struck for the sky.

Heim lay where he was for some time.

Eventually he opened his helmet and went to the bridge. Space blazed with stars, but Earth was already swallowing them again. "We're headed back down, eh?" he asked.

"Right-o," Penoyer answered. The strain had left him, his boyish face was one vast grin. "Got clean away, above their ceiling and past their radar horizon before you could say fout."

Then a long curve above atmosphere, but swiftly, racing the moment when Peace Controls orbital detectors were alerted, and now toward the far side of the planet. It had been a smooth operation, boded well for the privateer. If they carried it the whole way through, that was.

Heim lockered his suit and got back steadiness from the routine of an intercom check with all

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stations. Everything was shipshape, barring some minor bullet pocks in the outer plates. When Lupowitz reported, "The prisoner's awake, sir," he felt no excitement, only a tidal flow of will.

"Bring him to my cabin," he ordered.

The boat crept downward through night. Timing had been important. The Russian Republic was as amiably inept about TrafCon as everything else, and you could land undetected after dark on the Siberian tundra if you were cautious. Heim felt the setdown as a slight quiver. When the engines ceased their purr, the silence grew monstrous.

Two armed men outside his cabin saluted in triumph. He went through and closed the door.

Cynbe stood near the bunk. Only his tailtip stirred, and his hair in the breeze from a ventilator. But when he recognized Heim, the beautiful face drew into a smile that was chilling to see. "Ah-h-h," he murmured.

Heim made the formal Alerion salute. "*Imbiac,* forgive me," he said. "I am desperate."

"Truth must that be," it trilled in his ears, "if you think thus to rouse war."

"No, I don't. How could I better disgrace my side of the argument? I just need your help."

The green eyes narrowed. "Strange is your way to ask, Captain."

"There wasn't any other. Listen. Matters have gotten so tense between the war and peace factions on Earth that violence is breaking out. Some days ago my daughter was stolen away. I got a message that if I didn't switch sides, she'd be killed."

"Grief. Yet what can I do?"

"Don't pretend to be sorry. If I backed down, you'd have a distinct gain, so there was no point in begging your assistance. Now no matter what I myself do, I can't trust them to return her. I had to get a lever of my own. I bribed someone who knew where you were, recruited this gang of men, and—and now we'll phone the head of the organized appeasement agitators."

Cynbe's tail switched his heels. "Let us suppose I refuse," said the cool music.

"Then I'll kill you," Heim said without rancor. "I don't know if that scares you or not. But your delegation meets Parliament in another week. They'll be handicapped without their military expert. Nor are things likely to proceed smoothly, after such a stink as I can raise."

"Will you not terminate my existence in every case, Captain, that I never denounce you?"

"No. Cooperate and you'll go free. I simply want my daughter back. Why should I commit a murder that'll have the whole planet looking for the solution?

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They'd be certain to find me. The general type of this vessel is sufficient clue, since I've no alibi for the time of the kidnapping."

"Yet have you not said why I shall not accuse you."

Heim shrugged. "That'd be against your own interest. Too sordid a story would come out. A father driven wild by the irresponsible Peace Militants, and so forth. I'd produce my documents from New Europe in open court. I'd testify under neoscop what you admitted when last we talked. Oh, I'd fight dirty. Sentiment on Earth is delicately balanced. Something like my trial could well tip the scales."

Cynbe's eyes nictitated over. He stroked his chin with one slim hand.

"In fact," Heim said, "your best bet is to tell PCA you were taken by an unidentified bunch who wanted to sabotage the treaty. You persuaded them this was the worst thing they could do, from their own standpoint, and they let you go. Then insist that our own authorities hush the entire affair up. They will, if you say so, and gladly. A public scandal at this juncture would be most inconvenient." Still the Aleriona stood hooded in his own thoughts. "Cynbe," said Heim in his softest voice, "you do not understand humans. We're as alien to you as you are to us. So far you've juggled us pretty well. But throw in a new factor, and what are all your calculations worth?"

The eyes unveiled. "Upon you I see no weapon," Cynbe crooned. "If I aid you not, how will you kill me?"

Heim flexed his fingers. "With these hands."

Laughter belled forth. "*Star Fox* captain, let us seek the radiophone."

It was late morning in Chicago. Jonas Yore's Puritan face looked out of the screen with loathing. "What do you want, Heim?"

"You know about my girl being snatched?"

"No. I mean, I'm sorry for her if not for you, but how does it concern me? I have no information."

"I got word the kidnappers are skizzies in the peace faction. Wait, I don't accuse you of having any part in it. Every group has bolshes. But if you passed the word around quietly, personal calls to your entire membership list, directly or indirectly you'd get to them."

"See here, you rotten—"

"Turn on your recorder. This is important. I want to present Delegate Cynbe ru Taren." In spite of everything, Heim's heart came near bursting.

The Aleriona glided into pickup range. "My lord!" Yore gasped.

"In honor's name did Captain Heim appeal me-ward," Cynbe

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sang. "A bond is between us that we did battle once. Nor may my ancient race drink of shame. Is not yonder child returned, we must depart this planet and invoke that cleansing which is in open war. Thus do I command your help."

"M-m-my lord—I—Yes! At once!"

Heim switched off the set. The air whistled from his lungs and his knees shook. "Th-th-thanks," he stuttered. "Uh . . . uh . . . as soon as Vadasz lets me know she's arrived, we'll take off. Deliver you near a town."

Cynbe watched him for a time before he asked: "Play you chess, Captain? Of Earth's every creation, there is the one finest. And well should I like that you not have her enminded a while."

"No, thanks," Heim said. "You'd win on fool's mate every time. I'd better see about getting our false identification removed."

He was glad of the winter cold outside.

They were almost through when Cynbe appeared in the airlock, etched black across its light. His tone soared: "Captain, be swift. The wandersinger calls from your home. She is again."

Heim didn't remember running to the phone. Afterward he noticed bruises on shin and shoulder. But he did lock the radio room door.

Lisa looked at him. "Daddy!"

"Are you all right?" he cried. His hands reached out. The screen stopped them.

"Yes. They . . . they never hurt me. I got doped. When I woke up, we were parked here in town. They told me, take an elway from there. I was still dopy and didn't pay any attention—no number—Please hurry home."

"I'll—*ja*. Two, three hours."

The remnants of the drug left her more calm than him. "I think I know how it happened, Daddy. I'm awful sorry. That night you and Endre talked about your—you know—well, you'd forgot to turn off the general intercom switch. I listened from my room."

He remembered how slinky and mysterious she had acted in the following couple of weeks. He'd put that down to an attempt at impressing Vadasz. Now the knowledge of his carelessness hit him in the belly.

"Don't," she asked. "I never told. Honest. Only when Dick and some other kids teased me 'cause I wouldn't go in for that stupid Aleriona stuff, I got mad and told them one human was worth a hundred of those crawlies and my father was going to prove it. I never said more. But I guess word got back to somebody, 'cause those women kept asking me what I'd meant. I told them I was just bragging. Even when they said they'd beat me, I told them it was just a brag, and I guess they be-

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lieved that because they never did beat me. Please don't be too mad, Daddy."

"I'm not," he said harshly. "I'm more proud than I deserve. Now go to bed and rest. I'll be home as fast as I can."

"I missed you so much."

She switched off. Then Heim could weep.

Connie Girl purred aloft, and down again a kilometer outside Krasnoe. Heim escorted Cynbe to the ground. It was frozen, and rang underfoot. A few lights shone from outlying houses, dim compared to the winter stars.

"Here." Awkwardly, Heim proffered a heated cloak. "You'll want this."

"My thanks," blew from under the frost-cold locks. "When your authorities fetch me, I shall tell as you suggested. Wisest for Alerion is thus; and for I, who would not see you further hurt."

Heim stared at the thin snow-crust. It sparkled like Cynbe's fur. "I'm sorry about what I did," he mumbled. "It was no way to treat you."

"No more of anger indwells." Cynbe's song dropped low. "I knew not humans hold their young so dear. Well may you fare."

"Goodbye." This time Gunnar Heim shook hands.

The boat took off afresh, found orbital height and went toward Mojave Port alone a standard trajectory. As far as the world was concerned, she had gone out to check on the loading of the star cruiser. Heim was surprised to note how calmly he could now wait to see his daughter again.

And when it'd be for such a short time, too. The ship must depart in a few more days, with him her captain.

That had to be, he saw. The evil had grown so mighty that he dared not challenge it with less than his whole strength: which was found among the stars, not on this sick Earth. Nor would he be worthy to be Lisa's father, if he sent men against that thing whose creatures had tried to devour her, and did not go himself.

She'd be safe in Wingate's care. As for the Heimdal company, it might or might not survive without him, but that really made no difference. Lisa's grandfather would provide for her, whatever happened. *And don't forget the chance of prize money!*

Laughter welled in Heim. *Maybe I'm rationalizing a selfish atavistic desire to raise hell. Okay, what if I am? This is the way it's going to be.*

IX

They had celebrated an early Christmas. The tree glittered forlorn in the living room. Outside, a surf of rain drove against the windows.

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"It's so awful," Lisa said. "That there has to be a war."

"There doesn't, pony," Heim answered. "In fact, that's what we're trying to prevent."

She regarded him in bewilderment.

"If we don't stand up to Alerion," Heim said, "there'll be trouble and more trouble, worse each time, and we'll forever lose, until at last Earth is driven into a corner. And when it's cornered, the human race always does fight, with everything it's got. Planet against planet—that would be the real Ragnarok. What we have to do is show them right now that we aren't going to be pushed. Then we and they can talk business. Because space truly is big enough for everybody, as long as they respect each other's right to exist." He put on his cloak. "We'd better start."

They went downshaft in silence to the garage, and entered his flyer—himself, his daughter, her grandfather, two hard-looking men who must keep watch over her until this affair had been outlived, and Vadasz. Out the doors they glided, and rose through storm. The hull shivered and resounded. But when they got into the upper lanes, blue stillness encompassed them, with clouds below like snow mountains.

Wingate lit a cigar and puffed, his nutcracker face squinched together. Finally he barked, "I hate these goodbye waits, sitting around wishing you could think of something to say. Let's tune in Parliament."

"Not worth while," Heim replied. "They expect a full week of preliminary debate before they invite the Aleriona delegation. Every two-cento politician wants to make sure he's heard at least once."

"But according to the news yesterday, France came out near the top of the alphabetical draw. Coquelin will probably start to speak any minute."

"He'll—oh, go ahead." Heim was chiefly conscious of the slight form huddled between him and Vadasz.

The time was not much later in Mexico City than here, but you couldn't tell that from inside the Capitol. The view swept across the Chamber of Council, faces and faces and faces, white, brown, black, amber, their eyes zeroed on the rostrum as the speaker for Finland stepped down. President Fazil knocked with his gavel; through that waiting quiet, the sound was like nails being driven into a coffin. Wingate, whose Spanish was not the best, dialled for English translation.

"—the honorable spokesman for France, Mr. Michel Coquelin."

Heim set the 'pilot and leaned back to watch. The square shape trudged down the aisle deliber-

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ately, almost scornfully, and took a stance at the lectern. The camera zoomed in on a countenance shockingly aged: but one which might have been cast in iron.

"Mr. President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. I shall not detain you long at this point. The world knows the French feeling about New Europe. My country wishes to make her position entirely clear and to advance a certain argument. Since this is sure to precipitate considerable discussion, I request leave to defer my address until the other honorable spokesmen have finished theirs."

"You see?" Heim said. "He has to gain time for us to get clear. It was bad luck that France came on so early in the session, but he'll handle it."

"What's he going to say, anyhow, Daddy?" Lisa asked. "He *can't* let you be called pirates!"

Heim grinned. "You'll find out."

"Mr. President! Point of order." The camera wheeled around and closed in on Harold Twyman. He had jumped to his feet and looked angry. "In so grave a matter, a departure from precedence must be approved in the form of a motion."

Coquelin raised his brows. "I fail to see why there should be any objection to France yielding precedence," he said.

"Mr. President, distinguished members of this body," Twyman rapped, "the honorable spokesman for France has warned us that he intends a surprise. This is a time for serious discussion, not for debater's tricks. If we find ourselves forced to rebut an unexpected assertion, our meeting with the honorable delgates of Alerion may easily be postponed another week. There has already been too much delay. I insist that this chamber vote upon whether to let M. Coquelin play with us or not."

"Mr. President—" The Frenchman's retort was cut off. Fazil slammed his gavel and said:

"The chair finds the point well taken, if perhaps somewhat heatedly expressed. Does anyone wish to make a motion that the French statement be deferred until every other national spokesman has finished his remarks?"

"Oh, oh," Vadasz muttered. "This does not look good."

Heim reached out and adjusted the pilot for top speed. The engine hum strengthened. Above it he heard a member of the Argentine group say, "I so move," and a Dutchman, "I second."

"It has been moved and seconded—"

"What if they don't let him?" Lisa wailed.

"Then we've got to go like bats out of Venus," Heim said.

Coquelin began to speak in favor of the motion. After a few

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minutes, Vadasz clicked his tongue and said admiringly: "Never did I hear anything so long-winded. He is an artist."

"Um, Wingate grunted. "He may antagonize 'em."

"Obviously," said Heim in a bleak tone, "he doesn't expect to win, no matter what."

Debate droned back and forth. The flyer left the storm behind and fled over a huge wrinkled landscape. Far to the east gleamed the Sierra peaks. *We could lose all that beauty someday,* Heim thought.

Mojave Field sprawled into view. He slanted down on the beam and saw *Connie Girl* poised in the open. Garaging, formalities of clearance, the long walk across concrete under a glaring sun—was the light what blinded him?

They stopped at the ramp. "Well," said Wingate gruffly, "you can't waste time. God ride with you, son." He let the handclasp die.

Lisa came into Heim's arms. "Daddy, Daddy, I'm sorry, I c-c-can't help bawling."

"Blaze to that." He ruffled her hair and held her close against his chest. "We'll be back, you know. Rich and famous and a million stories to tell." He swallowed. "You . . . you've been . . . you are a good girl. I couldn't have asked for a finer girl. So long. Plain old *paa gensyn.*"

He gave her to Vadasz, who embraced her very lightly and bestowed a kiss on the wet cheek. *"Isten veled,"* the Magyar said "I shall bring you home a song."

Hastily, then, they mounted the ramp, stood waving while it retracted, and saw the lock close before them.

"Thanks, Endre," Heim said. He turned on his heel. "Let's get cracking."

The yacht could have sprung straight into orbit. But better not show unseemly haste. Heim took her up according to the beams. The sky darkened and stars awoke, until blackness was a jewel box. Vadasz fiddled with the com controls and eventually succeeded in getting a satellite relay from Mexico.

Debate on a procedural motion was not unlimited. The voting started before *Connie Girl* had made rendezvous. A roll call tolled overwhelming defeat.

"Mr. President," Coquelin's voice lifted from the 3V, blurred, small as an insect's, "this is a strange development. France had looked for the normal courtesies. Since I am required to make my country's basic policy statement today, I will. However, I note the time is near midday, and I warn the distinguished representatives that I shall be speaking at some length. Accordingly, I suggest that first we adjourn for lunch."

"The chair so rules," Fazil con-

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ceded. "This meeting will besume at 1400 hours sharp." His gavel clubbed down.

"An artist, I tell you," Vadasz laughed.

"A couple hours isn't much time to get under weigh, with a crew new to the ship," Heim reminded him.

The great torpedo shape hove in sight and waxed as he closed until it filled his bow vision. As yet she was uncamouflaged, and sunlight lay furious on the stern assembly; drive units, Mach rings, boathouses, turrets, hatches cast long shadows on the metal flanks.

"Yacht *Connie Girl* calling cruiser *Fox II*. We are coming in. Please stand by. Over."

Wingate had argued about the change of cognomen. "I know what your old command meant to you, Gunnar," he said. "But you'll get enough people mad without taking the name of a Navy ship."

"I'm not, exactly," Heim said. "Last I heard, foxes were still in the public domain. Besides, I damn well figure to rub people's noses in what the Navy ought to be doing. What it wants to do, in fact."

Number Four boathouse stood open for him. He cradled the yacht—she was about the size of a regular auxiliary—and fretted while airpumps filled the shell. The corridors beyond were bustle and clangor. He'd had the men aboard for assignments and instruction, but nonetheless he wished terribly there had been time for a shakedown cruise.

First Officer Penoyer saluted on the bridge. "Welcome, sir." Until Dave greeted him so, he had not really remembered how alone the captain is. "Full roster present. Work proceeding. Estimated time of acceleration, 2300 hours GMT."

"Knock at least an hour off that," Heim said.

"Sir?"

"You heard me." Heim sat down and riffled through the manual of operations. "Here, for instance. The C.E. doesn't have to check out the internal field compensators again. If they fail, we'll accelerate at no more than one-point-five gee; once in free fall, we can stand weightlessness till they're fixed. Not that I expect any trouble in his department anyway. He's good. Have him proceed directly to tuning the pulse manifolds. The more carefully that job is done, the nearer Sol we can go FTL."

"Aye, aye, sir." With noticeable distaste, Penoyer flicked the intercom and spoke to Uthg-a-K'thaq. Heim continued his search for corners that might be cut.

And somehow, in some typically human lefthanded fashion, the job was done. At 2145 klaxons hooted, orders echoed, atoms flamed in fusion generators and

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gravitational forces laid hold of space. Slowly, smoothly, with a deep purr felt less within the ears than the bones, *Fox II* slipped her moorings to Earth and departed orbit.

Heim stood on the bridge and watched his worlds recede. Still she dominated the sky, vast and infinitely fair, clouds and seas and a sapphire rim of sky. He had observed the continents in their nights and days as he rounded her: Africa, whence man came; Asia, where first he was more than a savage; Europe, where he outgrew myth and measured the stars Australia, long-sought dream; Antarctica of the heroes. But he was happy that his last sight as he drove starward was of America, where the law was first written that all men are free.

Doubts and fears, even homesickness, had fallen away. He was committed now, and joy dwelt within him.

"Stations report condition satisfactory," Penoyer announced after a while.

"Very good. Carry on." Heim found the intercom and called the steward's department. "Endre? D' you have things in hand so they can get along without you for a spell?—Okay, come onto the bridge. And bring your guitar. We'll want a song or two."

The Magyar's voice was troubled. "Captain, have you been listening to Parliament?"

"Uh . . . no. Too busy. Good Lord, they started fresh more than an hour ago, didn't they?"

"Yes. We're picking up the beam to Mars. I have watched and—well, they did not let Coquelin delay. He tried, with a long introductory speech, and the chair ruled he must keep to the point. Then he tried to introduce the evidence about New Europe, and someone objected, and they decided to vote on whether that was germane now. The roll is still being called, but already he has a majority against him."

"Oh-oh." Heim was not shaken, on this day when he commanded anew a ship for Earth. But the need for action stabbed through his nerves. "Mr. Penoyer," he directed, "signal for maximum acceleration and order all hands to emergency stations."

The mate gulped and obeyed. "Have Sparks shunt that debate to our 3V," Heim went on. "Mr. Vadasz, please come to the bridge." His chuckle was flat. "Yes, bring your guitar."

"What's the problem, sir?" Penoyer asked in unease.

"You'll see," Heim replied. "France is about to throw a nuke into the whole machine. Our plan was to have *Fox* well away by then. Now we'll need luck as well as brains and beauty."

The screen flickered to fuzzy motion. Coquelin was nearly drowned out by the risen rumble

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of engines. Earth dwindled among the stars and Luna's pocked face grew nearer.

"—this assembly is determined to give my country not one centimeter. As you like, ladies and gentlemen. I wished to say this gradually, for the blow is heavy at best. Now you must hear me whether you are ready or not."

The camera zoomed so close that Coquelin's visage filled the screen. That was a lousy trick, Heim thought. But, if he wasn't letting his own prejudices hoodwink him, this time it didn't work. Instead of underscoring every blemish, warts, moles, hairs, wrinkles, the closeup showed anger and unbreakable strength. Heim believed himself confirmed when the view moved back, to make Coquelin another man shuffling papers on a lectern.

"Mr. President, honorable delegates—" The translation could only suggest how the voice shifted, became the dry detached recital of an attorney making a technical point. "The Federation was founded and still exists to end the tragic anarchy that prevailed among nations before, to bring them under a law that serves the good of all. Now law cannot endure without equal justice. The popularity of an argument must be irrelevant. Only the lawful cause may be admitted. In the name of France I therefore advance the following points.

"1. The Constitution forbids each member nation to keep armed forces above the police level or violate the territorial integrity of any other member nation in any way. To enforce this, the Peace Control Authority is vested with the sole military power. It may and must take such measures as are necessary to stop aggressive acts, including conspiracy to commit such acts. The individuals responsible must be arrested and brought to trial before the World Court.

"2. The Naval branch of the Authority has been used beyond the Solar System, albeit only in relatively minor actions to suppress insurrection and riot or to protect the lives and property of humans on distant planets. By authorizing such action, and by negotiating agreements with various aliens, the Federation has *de facto* and *de jure* assumed the posture with respect to nonhuman societies that was traditional between governments on Earth prior to the Constitution. Hence Earth as a whole is a sovereign state with the lawful prerogative of self-defense.

"3. By attacking New Europe and subsequently occupying it, Alerion has committed an act of territorial aggression.

"4. If Alerion is not regarded as a sovereign state, negotiation of this dispute is legally impossible, and the Authority is required

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to take military measures against what can only be considered banditry."

A roar went through the hall. Coquelin waited, sardonicism playing over his mouth. When order had been restored, he said:

"Evidently this assembly does consider Alerion to be sovereign like Earth. So, to proceed—

"5. If Alerion is indeed a legitimate state, then by the preamble to the Constitution it belongs to the family of nations. Therefore it must be regarded as either (a) obliged to refrain from territorial aggression on pain of military sanctions, or (b) not so obliged, since it is not a member of the Federation.

"6. In case (a), Alerion is automatically subject to military sanctions by the Peace Control Authority. But in case (b), the Authority is also required, by the Constitution and by past precedent, to safeguard the interests of individual humans and of member states of the Federation. Note well, the *Authority* has that obligation. Not this honorable assembly, not the World Court, but the Peace Control Authority, whose action must under the circumstances be of a military nature.

"7. Accordingly, in either case an automatic state of war now exists between Alerion and the World Federation."

Chaos broke loose.

Vadasz had come in. He watched the scene for a space, as hundreds stood booing or cheering or screaming to be recognized, before he murmured: "Is that not a weak point there?"

"No," said Heim. "Remember the Moslem League case. Also, I re-read the Constitution, and it's quite clear. Of course, it helps that the thing was written before we'd met any nonhumans comparable to us." He turned to the mate. "Radar reports?"

"Eh? Oh—oh, yes. A large craft about 10,000 kilometers starboard high, vector roughly like ours."

"Damn! That'd be one of the Navy units, pulled in to guard Earth. Well, we'll have to see what happens." Heim ignored the mob scene on the 3V, rested his eyes on the cold serenity of the Milky Way and thought that this, at least, would endure.

Somehow quiet was enforced. Coquelin waited until the silence had become deathly. He raised another typewritten sheet and resumed in the same parched tone:

"8. In the event of territorial aggression, member states of the Federation are required to give every appropriate assistance to the Peace Control Authority, in the name of the Federation.

"9. In the judgment of France, this imposes an inescapable duty to provide armed assistance to the colonists of New Europe. How-

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ever, a member of the Federation is prohibited the manufacture or possession of nuclear weapons.

"10. There is no prohibition on individuals obtaining such weapons outside the Solar System for themselves, provided that they do not bring them back to the Solar System.

"11. Nor is there any prohibition on the unilateral authorization by a member state of the Federation of a private military expedition which so outfits itself. We grant that privateers were formerly required to be citizens of the country whose flag they flew, and that this might conflict with the national disarmament law. We grant also that eventually the issuance of letters of marque and reprisal was banned, by the Declaration of Paris in 1856. But while such treaties remain binding on their signatories, including France, they are not binding on the Federation as a whole, which is not a signatory and indeed has members like the United States of America which never were signatories. And we have seen that the Federation is a sovereign state, possessing all rights and responsibilities not explicitly waived.

"12. Therefore the Federation has the unrestricted right to issue letters of marque and reprisal.

"13. Therefore, and in view of paragraphs (7), (8), and (9), France has the right and the duty to issue letters of marque and reprisal in the name of the Federation.

"France has done so."

The 3V shrieked—more faintly each minute, as *Fox II* accelerated outward and outward. When she lost the Mars beam and reception ended, the racket in the Capitol had not yet subsided.

Penoyer said, "Whew! What's next?"

"An interminable debate," Heim said. "Coquelin will fight for every comma. Meanwhile nothing can be done about jellyfishing to Alerion. Hopefully, the people with guts will see they aren't beaten at the outset, will rally round and—I don't know."

"But us?"

"Maybe we can escape before someone realizes who that French privateer must be. Not that they can legally stop us without an Admiralty warrant; and you know how long that takes to get. But a nuclear shell is kind of final, and whoever fires it will have powerful friends in court."

Vadasz strummed his guitar and began to sing softly: *"Morgenrot, Morgenrot—"* Heim wondered what that was, until he remembered the old, old Austrian cavalry song:

"Morning red, morning red,
Wilt thou shine upon me dead?
Soon the trumpets will be blowing,
Then must I to death be going,

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I and many trusty friends!—" But it wasn't really sad, it had been chorused by troops of young merry men as they galloped with sunlight wild on banners and lances.

He laughed aloud. "Hey! An idea. There were exactly thirteen points in Coquelin's speech. I wonder if he did that on purpose?"

None answered, except the plangent strings. He gave himself to thoughts . . . Lisa, Connie, Madelon, Jocelyn. . . . Earth and Moon lay far behind.

"PCA-SN *Neptune* to cruiser *Fox II*. Come in, *Fox II*."

The voice rocketed them from their seats. "Judas," Penoyer whispered, "that's a blastship."

Heim checked the radar tapes. "The one paralleling us. She's gone to an interception course. And if they use English on us, when we've got a French registry, they know—" He bit his lip and settled before the com relay console. *"Fox II* to *Neptune,"* he said. "We read you. The master speaking. What's on your mind? Over."

"This is Rear Admiral Ching-Kuo, commanding *Neptune*. Cease acceleration and stand by to be boarded. Over."

Sickness fountained in Heim. "What do you mean?" he blustered. "We have clearance. Over."

"You are suspected of illegal intentions. You are ordered to return to Earth orbit. Over."

"Have you a warrant? Over."

"I will show you my authorization when I board, Captain. Over."

"That'll be too late, if you don't have any. Establish video contact and show me now. Otherwise I am not bound to obey. Over."

"Captain," said Ching-Kuo, "I have my orders. If you do not follow instructions, I shall be forced to fire on you. Over."

Heim's gaze flew among the stars. *No, no, no, not this! Another hour and we'd have been away! One hour!*

A flaring went through him. "You win, Admiral," he said; it sounded like a stranger talking. "Under protest, I yield. Give us time to compute a velocity-matching vector and we'll meet you. Over and out."

He slammed down the switch and opened the intercom to the engine room. "Captain to chief engineer," he said. "Are you there?"

"Indeed," Uthg-a-K'thaq belched. "All is satiswactory."

"No. Somebody's uncorked the bottle on hell. There's a blastship which says if we don't stop and surrender, he'll shoot. Prepare for Mach drive."

"Captain!" Penoyer yelled. "This deep in the sun's field?"

"If the sync is perfect, we can do it," Heim said. "If not . . . we're dead, no more. Uthg-a-K'thaq, do you believe we can?"

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"Gwurru! What a thing to ask!"

"You overhauled those engines yourself," Heim said. "I trust you."

Vadasz's guitar shouted at his back.

For a moment the intercom bore only the throb of machines. Then: "Cawtain, I am not God. Wut I think the chance is good for us. And I trust you."

Heim opened the general intercom. "Now hear this," he said; music raged around the words. "All hands stand by for Mach drive."

Penoyer clenched his fists. "Aye, aye, sir."

The drone from aft rose until it was the noise of gales and great waters. Space twisted. Stars danced in the viewports.

Long ago, Ernst Mach of Austria (*"Morgenrot, Morgenrot—"*) had held the key. Nothing exists in isolation. Inertia has no meaning without an inertial frame of reference: which must be the entire universe. Einstein showed inertial and gravitational mass are the same. But as for the phenomena themselves—Gravitation is describable by equations of a warped space. Inertia is, then, an inductive effect of the cosmic gravitational field on mass. If your gravitors can bend space, not the small amount needed for lift and thrust, but through a closed curve, your ship has no resistance to accelerative force. Theoretically, you can go as fast as you like. There are no more boundaries.

Neptune fired. The missile lagged by a million kilometers. Her captain yammered for instrument readings. Perhaps, oh, surely, surely, his prey had been torn apart by the forces generated with imperfect mesh of space curvatures here where the sun's power was still all-dominant. Nothing registered, no wreckage, no trace, except the howl of hydrogen atoms flung in bow wave and wake by a ship outpacing light. He dared not pursue.

Gunnar Heim straightened. One by one, he eased his muscles. "Well," he said, "we got away with it." The words were poor for the victory within him. Endre Vadasz was doing better:

"Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah!
And we are outward bound!"

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Sometime college professor, sometime member of the writers' colony at Ajijic, Guadalajara, Dr. Marsh is currently in California. You may think, if you have ever read the fiction in the ladies' magazines, that you have read something like this story in the ladies' magazines: but we assure you that you really never have. And never will . . .

The Sin of Edna Schuster

by Willard Marsh

As she did on all choir practice evenings, Edna Schuster allowed herself a full good hour for bathing, scenting, and dressing. When she descended to the living room, Charlie was in his T-shirt and old slacks, practicing putt shots.

"You won't be satisfied until you break another glass, will you?" she told him.

"Relax. We're not down to our last glass," he said complacently.

Straddling the carpet, he began waggling his hips in a complex series of adjustments that constituted his approach to the golf ball. Since the slacks had grown too tight for him, the effect was that of some large adolescent animal in estrus. He was aiming for a tumbler lying on its side ten feet away.

Waiting till he began his swing, Edna said, "Couldn't you pick a less slovenly costume?"

Irritably, she watched the ball roll neatly into the tumbler.

"It's comfortable, just like your curlers," Charlie said cheerfully, retrieving the ball.

She swung toward the TV screen in exasperation. It was hardly a fair comparison. She took effort with her hair solely to please him. Sullenly, Edna followed the antics of a variety show. Charlie had been glancing at it only intermittently, but now that an overexposed girl half his age came on to prance ineptly, he was all eyes. Watching his inane grin, Edna could read every nasty thought in his mind. Afterwards, a stimulating public service announcement came on, but in the middle of it Charlie switched to another channel.

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"Get a load of that sanctimonious crap, would you?"

"I won't have you using that word," she said.

"How about unctuous, then?"

"You know what word."

"You mean crap? You're perfectly right, I'm sorry," he said earnestly. "Crap usually implies horse crap. I should have been more specific. Sanctimonious elephant crap was really what I—"

"Well, I have to run along." Edna started for the door and he caught up with her.

"You always look so grim when you have choir practice," he smiled. "As if you're screwing yourself into a state of piety." He kept his hand on the doorknob. "Why don't you play hooky tonight? As faithful as you've been, they can spare you for one meeting. Let's have a beer at the bowling alley and shoot a couple of frames."

"I'm afraid that, unlike yours, my cultural pursuits have kept pace with my age," she said.

He sighed and kissed her cheek. "Okay, see you, honey." And as she opened the door, she stiffened at the pat on her backside.

Just across from the Methodist Church was a fragrant, shrub-screened area, an afterthought of a park, and as Edna approached it she slowed to a casual-appearing walk. But Raoul, whom she always kept waiting, was dozing on the bench. Like Napoleon, he was a small man whose abundant energy was refueled by the ability to cat nap in the saddle, so to speak. Seating herself cautiously beside him, Edna fed upon the features of her lover as they lay in repose beneath the leaf-filtered street lamp. He was darkly moulded, more finely wrought than any man she'd ever known, and their union had been so impetuous and intense that, even now, she didn't know his name, except that it was a mellifluous, European sounding one she never managed to pronounce correctly.

Leaning forward, Edna brushed his ear with her lips. At the touch Raoul came instantly awake, gathering his limbs together gracefully. He raised her hand and kissed it.

"Edna, my love. An eternity has lapsed since last I saw you," he said, in that astonishing rich baritone which seemed to emanate from somewhere other than his compact physique. He had no accent, apart from the overpreciseness one might acquire from a British tutor.

"How becoming your hair looks this way." He lifted his hand to her head in gentle reverence, and again Edna thrilled to the voice that had first attracted her in choir. That, and the lost, directionless air he wore as an expatriate from some obscure Latin country. Whether his exile was voluntary or not she hadn't yet discovered, be-

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cause the slightest allusion to the subject gave him deep distress.

Now he lit cigarettes for them, as always when they met. Raoul hadn't used tobacco in any form, and by contrast, her own daily pack embarrassed her. She'd tried to cut down, but when she couldn't she'd suggested that he take up smoking. Amenable to her every wish, he had.

Continuing to hold the flame, he said, "How lovely your new blouse is. At least it is new to me."

"No, it's new."

"It complements your eyes perfectly."

"I'm glad *someone* notices these things," she said. "What did you do today?" He had limited funds of some kind—enough, as he put it, for his limited wants, and as a consequence he was able to devote himself to intellectual activities.

"I have been trying to compose a sonnet," he said shyly. "But all I have achieved is the opening quatrain. Would you like to hear it?"

"You know I would."

He closed his eyes and lowered his voice to an urgent whisper.

"My love compells me to become a herald
And vocalize my passion like a rooster.
But woefully, I may not tell the world
The passion of my life is Edna Schuster."

"Oh Raoul, it's beautiful," Edna breathed.

"I fear it does not do you justice. But then, what could?" When she patted his hand, he said, "And how did your day go?"

"I spent all morning trying to compose a budget," she said bitterly. "I have no head for figures—according to Him."

"How dare a philistine like Him speak of figures, when he slights the most exciting figure one could wish for."

Again she had to pat his hand, and together they watched the church spire soaring beyond the shrubs.

"It seems so right, somehow," Edna murmured, "meeting near the church like this. As if it almost sanctifies our relationship." She laughed self-consciously. "Though I suppose it's bad taste to use such language in the scientific age. Like those awful people who parade with banners reading 'Be Prepared To Meet Thy Maker.'"

"I do not regard it as bad taste at all. I, for one, am constantly prepared to meet my Maker."

Hearing the hurt in his voice, she had to remind herself how seriously Latins took religion.

"I mean, it does have a certain medieval quality, Raoul, arranging trysts in churches," she said. "Though come to think of it, I suppose that would be about the only place a respectable woman could ever meet a man in your country, wouldn't it?"

"Ah, no. In my unhappy home-

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land everything is arranged," he said.

"But I meant—" she hesitated delicately, "—affairs, between married women and other men."

"Even those are arranged beforehand," he said morosely. "All is arranged."

She had the feeling that they weren't quite communicating, but she said tactfully, "Perhaps things will be better under a new regime."

"That is impossible," Raoul said flatly. "There is no tradition of rebellion in my unhappy homeland. But let us speak of cheerier things than politics. Where would you like to go tonight? The museum? The concert? The theatre?"

She wished that he might, for once, offer her a different variety of choices. Not that she could risk going anywhere with him in a town this small.

"I'll leave it up to you, Raoul."

"Let us go, then." He stood up, then snapped his fingers in impatience. "It seems that I have forgotten the tickets," he said. "We shall have to stop by my apartment en route."

And now the worst part of the evening was at hand, the furtive walk through the side streets that led to his small bachelor apartment. Edna hurried along beside him in embarrassed silence, feeling driven like a donkey by carrot and stick, her need for physical fulfillment and her fear of discovery. Only when they were safely inside the door could she relax and anticipate the subtleties of his courtship.

"May I offer you a glass of wine while I search for the tickets?" She hesitated, then agreed, letting him seat her at the table opposite the studio couch. He lit the candles, turned out the overhead light and filled their glasses from a decanter. "I shall join you, if I may, since we have ample time."

"Yes, ample," Edna agreed, enjoying the overtones of the phrase, since time was the essence of all arts.

"You continuously astonish me, my love."

"In what way, Raoul?"

"By your phenomenal combination of beauty and intelligence. Your beauty I am becoming accustomed to," he said, "if one can become accustomed to a daily miracle. But there seem no limits to your knowledge. For example tonight, your familiarity with medieval church history."

"Oh, it's just an accident," Edna said lightly. "I mean, a person isn't really responsible for whatever gifts she's born with."

"You are too unassuming. It is your one flaw," he chided her, "but even a goddess needs a flaw. Let us have another glass of wine."

"I really shouldn't. This one's gone to my head already."

And it was true, she thought, watching him refill their glasses.

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It was at this stage of the evening that Raoul's apartment always took on an unsettling aspect. Everything in it—couch, table, chairs—faced in one direction, for some reason. Even his desk, where he worked mornings on his poetry. She had searched through it once while he was opening a bottle of wine in the kitchen, but there had been nothing more than dust in its drawers. . . .

Suddenly she heard his ardent voice at her ear, and as his imploring hands moved over her she said weakly,

"No, Raoul, we mustn't. We live in separate worlds . . ."

But as always, his strength was too much for her, and she was borne to the studio couch in a daze in which familiar and thus secure endearments echoed through her bliss.

When they were through, Edna sat up on the couch and said,

"I lost my head. You must never take advantage of me that way again, Raoul."

He nodded contritely. "I shall try to be strong enough for both of us next time."

As she was getting dressed, the zipper on her blouse stuck. Raoul gave her a hand with it, yanking vigorously, then he cried out sharply.

"What is it?"

"Just a little accident," he said. "I nicked myself. Hold still, I think it is working now."

Edna felt a steady, dry trickle down her back. She turned to see Raoul holding his cut finger. There was a stream of sawdust leaking from it.

"Do not be alarmed," he said. "It is not serious. But then, few things are."

She supposed that was true. Nevertheless, from then on she insisted on his blowing out the candles.

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We might have guessed that only a woman could write an SF story about a Thing From Outer Space which looks like a vacuum cleaner and sleeps in the guest room. Yes, Miss Sanford has done it, and, we're sure you'll agree, done it with taste and skill and charm.

MRS. PRIBLEY'S UNDERDOG

by Sue Sanford

When Mrs. Pribley saw it out there on her darkened lawn, she thought only that Jose, the gardener, had left the mower out, and that she must go shortly, when locking up, and wheel it into the garage. Otherwise, Jose, who was even older than she, would find it in the morning and begin worrying again about his failing memory.

Then she saw it move.

She doddered closer to the window, peering to make sure that someone, or something, wasn't in trouble out there. After watching for a time, during which the thing remained motionless, she shrugged and drew the draperies (a task neglected by Jenny, the ancient housekeeper), and went to wash the dishes. *Of course* it was the mower! Truth to tell, she decided, her brother Hector's talk at dinner about his experiments had left her imagination over-active.

"Hector Crowley, you haven't touched a bite!" she had said.

"Millicent, I don't want to burden you with my problems . . ."

She felt herself come alive. "Oh, *do* burden me, dear!"

He sighed. "This afternoon I read a paper before the Society, detailing my experiments. No . . . they didn't laugh. Laughter I could have borne. But not embarrassed throat-clearings, averted eyes. Millicent, I feel such a fool!"

"So, I fancy, did Pasteur," she said, taking more potatoes.

"No, they're right to doubt me. I doubt myself. What possible reason do I have for believing, without proof, that I've been receiving messages in thought transference from outer space?"

She put her hand on his. "What possible reason," she had asked, "do you have for believing, without proof, that you *haven't*?"

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Now she smiled, hanging up the dishcloth, remembering that Hector, the rest of the evening, had seemed revitalized. She'd meant to have Carl, the chauffeur, run him home, but called a cab instead; Carl's sciatica was bad again. And when Hector left just now, he still was too elated to care in what conveyance he rode.

This, she thought, was still the best of life: To be needed. Indeed, when a suitor appeared who needed her so desperately as had her several husbands, rest their sweet souls, she'd marry again.

She walked through the silent house, turning out lights. Starting to lock the front door, she remembered the mower.

Outside, the night was still. No leaf moved. Yet she felt a strange awareness. She stood a moment, listening, but there was no sound.

She looked into the dark, trying to locate the mower. And something came to her, a thought not her own:

Over here.

She wobbled a few steps farther and leaned into the night.

It wasn't the mower. She couldn't see clearly what it was, but it wasn't the mower. She reached out and touched warm smoothness. Without surprise, she felt a stir. Unquestioning, she knew that it was tired, that it was hungry.

"Would you care to come inside?" she asked, and watched the dull-silver bulk move silently upright. She puffed back across the lawn, through the open door, and turned on the light.

It stood facing her. At least, she assumed it was facing her. Near the top of the oval shape were two slitted openings, upon which she fixed her gaze in the calm acceptance that they were eyes. The visitor stood motionless on his tripod base until she started toward the kitchen. The sound of oiled movement assured her that the guest was following.

She pulled out a chair at the kitchen table and watched the tripod retract as the oval body changed shape, amoeba-like, flattening at the lower end to slide onto the chair.

"*Now*, then," she said, going to the refrigerator. Inside, she found a nearly meatless roast-bone, and Jenny had stuffed a slice of cake into the butter-keep. Mrs. Pribley put the meat platter on the cabinet, the cake on a plate, brought silver, a napkin, poured milk into a glass. She sat down and waited. Nothing happened.

"Oh, please don't be embarrassed!" she said. "What may I offer you? There's a little Jello, I think."

The visitor turned, and she saw the eye-slits directed at the scraps of roast. She rose uncertainly and set the platter on the table.

A slot opened in the middle of her guest; a forceps emerged to lift the bone. Another opening ap-

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peared below the eye-slits. Neatly, the bone was inserted, the mouth-opening closed, the forceps withdrew. She watched for chewing. There was none.

"Oh, you like that!" she cried. "I wish there were more." But he was no longer hungry, she sensed, only tired.

She led him upstairs to the guest room, where he slid to rest on the floor beside the bed.

"Good night. Pleasant dreams," she said, and closed the door.

In her own room, she dialed her brother's number, heard the receiver lifted, and cried, "It's here! The thing that sent you the messages! And it's carnivorous!"

"What's where?" a sleepy voice inquired.

"In the guest room. He's kind of a silver plastic oval, dear, and changes shape when he isn't walking on his tripod." She paused for breath.

"You ain't funny, lady."

The phone seemed to vibrate as the connection was severed. She, too, hung up, thinking that it would be wiser to phone Hector in the morning. Her eyesight was poor; she couldn't risk another wrong number. It wouldn't take much to panic the city.

She slept well, anticipating Hector's redemption before his colleagues.

She awakened early, bathed and dressed, and looked in on her visitor, who was sleeping. Softly, she closed the door and went downstairs.

There was meat in the freezer, but it wouldn't thaw in time for breakfast. She put on her hat and made her way to the market.

She returned to find Jenny at the kitchen table drinking coffee.

"Enough left for me to have some?" Mrs. Pribley asked.

"What next, I ask you?" Jenny said.

Mrs. Pribley found coffee in the pot, poured a cup, and sat beside Jenny. "What did you say, dear?"

"That varmint upstairs, thing looks like a vacuum cleaner. Where'd it come from?"

"Well," Mrs. Pribley said, "I really can't say."

"Bet it belongs to that brother of yours. Like the time he unloaded all them white rats on us."

"Jenny, I explained that. He was finished with his experiments; the laboratory wouldn't take them back. He couldn't release them; the poor things would have perished in the wild state."

"Wild state! Then they picked the wrong place comin' here!"

Mrs. Pribley smiled. "I take it our guest is awake?"

"And rarin' to go," Jenny said. "Tried to bite me, *that's* all."

"Oh, come now! I can easily imagine, though, your being startled. I should have left you a little note."

"Little note! What would you

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say in a little note? 'Look out, Jenny, there's something in the guest room going to take your leg off'?"

Mrs. Pribley rose to wash the cups and saucers as Jenny continued. "Not in all the time since we was girls . . . Mr. Robert and that woman, Mr. George with his drinking . . ."

"Rest their precious souls," Mrs. Pribley said gently. "You look peaked, dear. Why not have a little nap?"

As Jenny left, Mrs. Pribley unwrapped the meat, wishing the guest would come down without her having to toil up the stairs. Almost immediately, she heard movement and turned to see the visitor seating himself.

"Good morning," she said. "Shall I broil this?" and knew, without knowing how she knew, that she needn't cook the meat.

"I *do* hope you slept well," she said, and felt the waves of friendliness enveloping her. Impulsively, she leaned toward the guest and stroked him above the eye-slits. He pressed against her palm, responding.

She excused herself and went to the kitchen phone, dialed carefully, and heard her brother's voice.

"Hector, did you sleep well?"

"Not too well, my dear. I've failed again. I can conclude only that I've imagined it all . . . the exchange of mathematical problems, of philosophical theories . . . merely an old man's mind playing tricks."

"No wonder you couldn't reach him! He's here!" she said, beaming.

She could hear Hector's rapid breathing.

"No, no, you're mistaken," he said crossly. "Why should he come to you instead of to me?"

"Perhaps because I'm cheerier company," she replied sharply. "Stop being silly. You were *here* last night. He *did* come to you!"

His voice grew stronger. "Listen, Millicent, is he there in the room? Now, very carefully, say to him, 'E=mc²'."

"I'll do no such thing!" she said. "You know I've no head for figures. I'd get it wrong, and maybe insult him."

"Never mind, I'll be right over."

She hung up and beckoned the guest to follow. In the living room, he sat on the hassock while she dusted.

When Hector arrived, he walked slowly toward the hassock. Mrs. Pribley began, "Hector Crowley, I'd like you to meet . . ."

"Millicent, hush! Words only confuse thought transference."

She sat on the couch, watching Hector and the guest, neither of whom moved. After a time, her brother shrugged and sank down beside her.

"What were you saying?" she asked.

"It's no use. I tried some of the

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simpler mathematical formulae we began with months ago. I received no response whatever."

"Shall I try? I'll bet I could get through to him, by George!" She stopped abruptly, feeling this sounded like a frivolous reference to darling George, her third. But Hector was preoccupied.

"No, I think not," he said. "As you say, Millicent, you've no head for figures."

"I didn't mean figures. But we've become quite friendly. Isn't that important, dear, where communication is involved?"

Hector patted her hand. "I doubt it. Though I must admit that your knack for 'getting through', as you say, where others fail, is quite incredible."

"If you're referring," she said huffily, "to my marital gallery of misfits . . ."

"My dear, I had no such thought! I'm sure that Robert and George and John had many fine qualities . . . if you looked for them."

"You've left out Bertram."

"Yes, and Bertram." He fell silent.

"What shall we do now?" she asked.

"I don't know. This is most embarrassing."

"How do you mean, dear?"

"As a scientist, even as a citizen, it's my duty to bring this to the attention of the proper authorities. Yet my paper is a matter of record with the Society. And *this*," he gestured, "reveals none of the intellectual endowments which my paper describes. I'll look more ridiculous than ever, thrusting myself into the limelight."

"Then tell me whom to call, and *I'll* report it," she said. "Though perhaps you'd better dial."

"No," Hector said firmly. "I've never hidden behind a woman yet." He walked to the phone. She followed and held his hand as he talked.

On an afternoon three weeks later, Mrs. Pribley's visitor was returned to her in a Government van. Scotch-taped to his midsection was a report, which she read with a magnifying glass, after feeding her guest and bedding him down for a nap. The findings, as Hector had told her, were inconclusive. The creature was believed to be male and bore resemblance in cellular structure to earthly mammals, though composed of unknown elements. The intelligence tests, she read, were meaningless, due to lack of knowledge of the subject's previous associations. At the end was a casual, handwritten note: "Please bring subject for continued testing during first full week each month. Notify us of any change in appearance or behavior."

And that, she thought, putting away her magnifying glass, seemed to be that.

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She went to the kitchen and poured a cup of coffee. Jenny recklessly was sloshing batter into the mixer.

"Here, I'll do that," Mrs. Pribley said, seizing a dishcloth to clean up the mess. "You drink that coffee, dear."

Jenny relinquished her unsteady grip on the bowl and sat down.

"Jenny, about the guest room . . ."

"I know. I seen it come in. The white rats all over again."

"We must be very gentle. This has been a trying time, all those tests."

"I'll be gentle from two, three rooms away."

"Perhaps that's best," Mrs. Pribley agreed. "I think I'll have Hector come for dinner. He mustn't be alone these days."

The headlines, she knew, were like wounds in him. Every paper quoted mockingly from his report to the Society, which described his correspondent as a genius.

She got him on first dial, and took this as a good omen.

"Dear, this is Millicent."

"Not *now!*" His voice came to her tense with annoyance.

"Hector, I know it's been difficult . . ."

"Millicent, *please*. Just leave me alone. Will you do that?"

She heard him hang up. The click of the receiver was like a shock going through her.

"He coming?" Jenny asked.

"What? Oh. No, dear, he's busy."

"You look awful. You feel all right?"

Mrs. Pribley made a smile. "I'm fine!" she said. "Look, Jenny, why don't you take two weeks and visit your sister? Jose and Carl need a vacation, too. Tell them for me, there's a dear."

"Who'll *do* for you, with us gone?" Jenny demanded.

"Pish-tosh! I'll manage beautifully!"

Jenny left the room, and Mrs. Pribley wrote checks for the three of them, feeling guilty, knowing that she was doing this selfishly. For the first time, they seemed too heavy a burden. It was she who needed rest.

Indeed, she was so tired that she could scarcely finish Jenny's packing.

When they were gone, Mrs. Pribley toiled slowly up the stairs, holding to the banister. At the guest room door, she leaned against the wall and formed a careful smile before entering.

The guest started as she opened the door. Instantly, she forgot her depression. "You poor, sweet dear!" she crooned. "They've exhausted you with their probing and poking!" She stroked the warm silver above the eye-slits, and murmured soothingly as they went downstairs.

"I've a piece of delicious round-

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steak for you. Won't that be nice? I'll brew a pot of tea, and those cold biscuits will be all I'll want. We'll have a lovely little meal, the two of us."

She set out her good china in the dining room. As they sat down, she was troubled by some uneasiness in her companion . . . of course! The poor darling was lonely!

She smiled. "I'm very glad," she said, "to have you back."

She felt the response of gratitude, affection, wrapping her in warmth, melting her own loneliness. Looking at her friend, she thought of Robert, Bertram, George and John . . . yes, and Hector. How alike they were, unabsorbed by the world, never truly a part of it except through her. She was their link to life. And now again, still, she was needed.

"There's no reason for you to be lonely," she said. "The whole matter is quite simple. I wonder I didn't think of it before."

In the silence, she sipped her tea. Some of her friends would be astonished. But they'd been astonished before. Several times. As for the poor souls who feared anyone in the least different from themselves; once they became accustomed to him, they'd forget all about his being silver.

She leaned across the corner of the table, beaming. "Everything is going to be fine," she promised. "I shall marry you."

Sensing his incomprehension, she searched for words. "Marry," she said, "that means . . . let me see, now." Remembering Hector's saying that words confused thought transference, she closed her eyes. When she opened them, she perceived that her offer had been accepted, if only dimly understood.

"Well," she said, "you grasp the important part; you can stay with me and be safe. And, as your wife, I shall accompany you to the laboratory when you go for tests. Won't that be cozy?"

Her husband-to-be leaned close to have his head stroked and she obliged, before rising to carry out the plates. He followed and sat at the table while she washed the dishes. She could feel his contentment mingling with her own as she hummed Lohengrin off-key.

When the doorbell rang, her fiancee followed her as far as the living room, where he mounted the hassock. She hurried to open the door.

"Hector, whatever in the world!"

He reeled past her into the living room. Closing the door, she joined him. "Hector, sit down before you fall!" She tugged him toward the couch, but he shook her off.

"'Millicent, I should have known from the beginning!"

"Known what?"

He pointed at her betrothed. "It's so logical!" he cried.

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"Stop pointing at him. What's logical?"

He careened back to the front door, calling to her, "Wait, there's someone you must meet."

Confused, she sank to the couch, trying to gather her wits. Poor Hector clearly had slipped a cog. She must catch her breath and phone the doctor.

But her attention was drawn to her companion. On the hassock, the silver body was taut; she felt his building excitement, anticipation, joy. The eye-slits were directed at the doorway. She followed their gaze. Presently Hector re-entered, followed by someone else. She struggled to her feet, squinted and peered.

Hector came to help her up. Her eyes focused on his companion. Taller than Hector. Much taller. Broader-shouldered. And silver.

The hassock overturned, and Mrs. Pribley saw her intended rush toward the newcomer to leap on him, again and again. She nearly lost her precarious balance, but Hector held her with trembling hands.

"This gentleman," he said, "is my correspondent."

"*Which* gentleman?" she managed to ask.

Her brother cackled gleefully. "Your house-guest, quite obviously, is his dog!"

An hour later, after coffee and sandwiches, Mrs. Pribley sat drowsily beside Hector, thinking that it had been quite a day. In a chair across from them sat the newcomer, stroking the space-dog. Mrs. Pribley marveled sleepily at how easy thought-transference was, although she and Hector, through habit, spoke aloud.

"Of course," Hector was saying, "since *we* sent animals first, it should have been obvious that anyone else would, too. My dear, you can imagine our friend's amusement at my having tried the theory of relativity on his dog!"

She laughed obligingly, trying to hold her eyes open.

"Incidentally, Millicent," her brother continued, "please forgive my abruptness on the phone. You see, our friend had just arrived when you called. We were discussing his problem."

Mrs. Pribley's eyes opened brightly.

"Problem?" she said.

"Yes," Hector frowned. "You see, his planet has been proving for centuries that lasting peace is possible. Not only in theory, but in application. So, freed from the preoccupations of weapons development, they've advanced remarkably. They can, for example, arrest the aging process. Oh, my dear, the knowledge he brings us! The hope!"

"*What* problem?" she insisted.

Her brother frowned. "He realizes that he'll be regarded as an

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invader. Or, at the least, an intruder. His knowledge simply will not be accepted, because he is not one of us. When you phoned, we were discussing this, attempting to form some plan for his absorption into the community."

Mrs. Pribley was fully awake. She sat erect. She smiled warmly at the newcomer. She leaned toward him.

Now, don't you worry one single minute!" she said. "*I'll* think of something!"

RICHARD McKENNA: *b. May 9, 1913—d. November 1, 1964*

You can't just plain die. You got to do it by the book . . .

These were Richard Milton McKenna's first words in print. They are the opening lines of *Casey Agonistes,* published in this magazine in Sept., 1958.

On November 1, 1964, McKenna died. He might have been pleased to know he did it "just plain." His heart simply stopped beating; he went to sleep at night healthy and whole; he never woke up in the morning.

In the brief eight years of his career as a writer, he had written perhaps twenty stories, and one and a half novels. To those who knew him best, and cared the most, the incomplete book, and the termination before its inception of all the writing yet to come, are in many ways the greater tragedy.

Mac beat the game, personally. He died quickly, suddenly, painlessly, at the height of his powers. He was fifty-one. He had been thirty-six before he discovered he wanted to be a writer; forty, when he began studying; forty-four when he sold *Casey*; forty-nine when the award-winning bestseller, *The Sand Pebbles,* was published. It had taken more than two years of steady work to produce; the obligation of sudden celebrity made the next book take longer, and now it will never be done.

One other way Mac beat the game. For the first forty-three years of his life he was alone in the world. He left home at eighteen to join the Navy; left the Navy at forty, and enrolled at the University of North Carolina. He met a librarian there, and they were married the day after his graduation. In the last eight and a half years of his life, he discovered, with Eva, such companionship, communication, and domestic warmth as few men are privileged to learn. He had, in every way, climbed to the height of his greatest hopes, and beyond them . . .

Every way but one. In the autobiographical notes he wrote for his first book publication, he finished by saying:

Hope to live to 100 and write something every day of it.

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Our admired and ever-dependable creator of verses, Leah Bodine Drake, has published two books of poems—A HORNBOOK FOR WITCHES and THIS TILTING DUST; has written reviews of poetry for The Atlantic Monthly; *and most recently has acted as confidential secretary and editorial assistant to cybernetic expert, Dr. C. A. Muses, of Lausanne, Switzerland (with whom she has just finished editing an anthology of contemporary British and American verse, THE VARIOUS LIGHT). Here, she celebrates her return from the Old World with what she describes as a "story-poem." Admittedly written in the style and mood of her distant kinsman, the late, great Lord Dunsany, its lovely language and imagery form just such a memorial as is suited to him.*

TIME AND THE SPHINX

(In Memory of Lord Dunsany)

by Leah Bodine Drake

TIME WAS WEARY OF THE Sphinx. Age after age, eon after eon, the eyes of Time had looked upon the Sphinx where she crouches between the river and the sand, forever staring into the rising sun and smiling her ambiguous smile.

Time could remember when the Sphinx had been young and he had loved her. Before the Pyramids were built, stone upon careful stone; before the desert Djinn carved Petra from ruby star-dust shaken from Antares' rays; before the wall of the children of Han slithered like a dragon across the yellow hills where unicorns stamp; even before shaggy men raised Stonehenge to salute the dawn—even before these, nimble fingers had fashioned the young Sphinx, painted her cheeks and set her between the river and the sand. Her face had been fairer then, the centuries had not yet gnawed like rats at those stony excellences. But even then that sly and subtle smiling had troubled the soul of Time, for it hinted at a

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secret that he, the elder and with older lore, could not fathom.

And as the sand gathered, grain by grain, between her lion-paws, city after city had risen and gone down: proud Troy, burning with its double flame of beauty and death; Antioch, coloured like a peacock, peering through jeweled veils at Rome; Thebes, where the gods walked; Balkh, mother of cities high in Asia's heart; Carthage, so cruelly splendid, that had become less than an echo upon the wind; Baalbek, and Babylon, and Tara of the kings. All had had their hour, and all had been vanquished by the hand of Time. But between the river and the sand still crouched the Sphinx, enduring the dubious caresses of Time while she gazed just a little way beyond him into the rising sun.

Then Time grew tired of seeing that calm head which would not be humbled before him. His caresses turned to blows and his hand fell heavily upon her painted cheeks and the sand crept about her loins. But still the huge woman-monster continued to smile her secret smile and gaze at something just beyond him.

Then Time set himself to devise ways of bringing her to heel, and he spent long ages—as with one hand he tumbled Ys back into the sea and with the other hand swept the Mayas from the map—dreaming of means by which he could rid himself of this disquieting foe. Nation after nation rose and were, for a while, and then were not. The Moors left Granada, hiding the keys of their ravished palaces in the folds of their cloaks. The jungle closed in upon Angkhor, upon the coiled serpents and the little dancing queens. The riders of the steppes turned the heads of their small, wiry horses toward the cities of the West and terribly dreamed. And riding upon a whirlwind and vanishing within it, came and departed Bonaparte, but not before he had stood before the Sphinx and given her glance for glance.

And still Time chafed at the everlastingness of the Sphinx who endured while more lovable things perished: the eyes of Helen, the music of Atlantis, the great bronze horse of Leonardo: Time did not know how much longer he could spare "The Last Supper".

Then one morning, as he wrinkled the face of a harlot and watched the last of the Shawnees die, he thought of the one appalling way to overthrow the Sphinx.

Ever had the weapons with which man dreadfully amused himself become more complex and more evil. Time had seen the stone ax give way to the spear, and the arrow had passed from history even as had the knightly sword. He had seen gunpowder innocently born in a land of porcelain pagodas to flower horribly in the

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countries of the West. Now and again Time opened his treasure-chest and gave his beautiful or cruel gifts to man—those gifts which he had brought with him when, with his sister the Earth, Time had been cast from the heart of the sun. Now he bethought him of a gift which would indeed overthrow the Sphinx and place her among those things which had been and were not.

Then, not without sadness (for Time loved his sister Earth and the curious and dangerous and noble things upon her) he opened his treasure-chest and gave into the hands of man his last gift. And man took the gift, which had been born in the sun and had the sun's power, and man played dreadfully with it, and the gift was a perilous gift.

And so Time went again into Egypt and stood before the Sphinx where she crouched between the river and the sand, and he said, "O woman-monster who persists in enduring while worthier things fail, O you of whom I am weary—your doom will come upon you at last and I shall conquer! A while and yet a while, and man will play one game too many with this new toy I have given him, and it shall get out of hand, being a perilous toy and not meant for his playing. And when it does, Earth and all things upon her, even you and your abominable smiling, will blaze up into one great cloud of flame. And all the things of Earth, yea, even the roots of the mountains, will drift away into space as cindery dust. And that which has been shall be as though it never were, and you, O Sphinx, shall be as the rest, and I will no longer have to endure your everlastingness and your smile."

Then the Sphinx spoke. Her thick lips moved as they had never moved since she first greeted her father Ra, as he rose all golden on the day of her birth.

"Time, old enemy and lover", said the Sphinx, "You have verily found the means of destroying me at last. This weapon which contains the sun's power and with which man now most dreadfully plays, shall send down to death this Earth he treads and all that his hands have made, and all that Hands greater than his have made, even the roots of the mountains. And even I, who am coeval with them, shall die."

Then yet again spoke the Sphinx. "But when Earth goes into oblivion in a burst of flame, you also, O Time, must perish. For you are of this world only, and the universes know you not, as do not the divine Hands that made us. And so, until that ending, I shall face you still, O Time."

And the lion-woman, smiling secretly, fixed her eyes on Ra, the rising sun her father, and she waited in unalterable grandeur for death.

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Time spoke three words: "You have conquered." And brooding somberly on the end of Earth and on his own annihilation, Time saluted the Sphinx in farewell and departed for a peak in the Himalayas where a temple stood whose ruin was long overdue; and on the way there he stopped to wither the petals of a rose.

ADDENDUM

In A GALAXY AT A TIME (December 1964) I suggested that when 5,000,000 supernovas explode in a galactic nucleus like that of our own Milky Way Galaxy—one supernova stimulating the next like tumbling dominoes—all will be visible at the same time to an observer on a planet like the Earth, which is in the galactic outskirts.

Mr. Trevor Barker of Brooktondale, New York, writes to say that I have neglected the 850 light-year width of the nucleus in my discussion and so I have.

When a supernova explodes, it can't affect a neighboring pre-supernova (which I calculated would be 5 light-years away) until the radiation of the first star reached the second—and that would take 5 years. If the second star was on the far side of the first (with respect to ourselves) an additional 5 years would be lost while the light traveled back to the vicinity of the first. We would therefore see the second supernova 10 years later than the first and long after the first had faded off to invisibility. In short, the 5,000,000 supernovas would be seen by us to be spread over something like 1000 to 1500 years, *not* all at once.

The Galactic nucleus would not become a glowing Moon-like object, but would show individual twinkles. At first there would be only three or four twinkles a decade and then as the centuries passed there would be more and more until finally there might be several hundred visible at one time—before they all went out and left behind dimly glowing gaseous turbulence. In a way, that might be even more interesting. My thanks to Mr. Barker for this better view.

—ISAAC ASIMOV

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SCIENCE

HARMONY IN HEAVEN

by Isaac Asimov

I NEVER ACTUALLY TOOK ANY courses in astronomy, which is something I regret, for looking back on it now, there were a number of courses I did take which I might cheerfully have sacrificed for a bit of astronomy.

However, one must look at the bright side, which is that now, every once in a while, I come across a little item in my astronomical reading which gladdens my heart by teaching me something new. If I had had formal training in the field, then these items would all have been old stuff and I would have missed my moments of delight.

For instance, I have come across a recent text in astronomy, "Introduction to Astronomy" by Dean B. McLaughlin (Houghton-Mifflin, 1961) which has delighted me in this fashion in several places. Let me, therefore, recommend it to all of you without reservation.

As an example, Professor McLaughlin intrigued me so much with his comments on Kepler's harmonic law that, in my ecstasy, I devoted more thought to it than I had ever done before, and I see no reason why I should not share the results of that thinking with you. In fact, I insist upon it.

I might begin, I suppose, by answering the question that I know is in all your minds: What is Kepler's harmonic law? Well—

In 1619, the German astronomer, Johannes Kepler, discovered a neat relationsip between the relative distances of the planets from the Sun, and their periods of revolution about the Sun.

Now for two thousand years, philosophers had felt that planets were spaced at such distances that their movements gave rise to sounds that united in heavenly harmony (the "music of the spheres"). This was in

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analogy to the manner in which strings of certain different lengths gave forth sound that united in pleasing harmony when simultaneously struck.

For that reason, Kepler's relationship of distances and periods, which is usually called, with scientific dullness, "Kepler's third law" (since he had earlier discovered two other important generalizations about planetary orbits) is also called, much more romantically, "Kepler's harmonic law."

The law may be stated thus: "The squares of the periods of the planets are proportional to the cubes of their mean distances from the Sun."

To follow up the consequences of this, let's get slightly mathematical (as slightly as possible, I promise). Let's begin by considering two planets of the Solar system, planet-1 and planet-2. Planet-1 is at mean distance, D_1 from the Sun and planet-2 is at mean distance, D_2 ("mean" means "average.") Their periods of revolution are, respectively, P_1 and P_2. Then, by Kepler's harmonic law, we can say that:

$$P_1^2/P_2^2 = D_1^3/D_2^3 \qquad \text{(Equation 1)}$$

This is not a very complicated equation, but any equation that can be simplified *should* be simplified, and that's what I'm going to do next. Let's pretend that planet-2 is the Earth and that we are going to measure all periods of revolution in years and all distances in astronomical units (A.U.).

The period of revolution of the Earth, by definition, is 1 year; therefore P_2 and P_2^2 both equal 1. Then, too, the astronomical unit is defined as the mean distance of the Earth from the Sun. Consequently, the Earth is 1 A.U. from the Sun, which means that D_2 and D_2^3 both equal 1.

The denominators of both fractions in Equation 1 become unity and disappear. With only one set of P's and D's to worry about, we can eliminate subscripts and write Equation 1 simply as follows:

$$P^2 = D^3 \qquad \text{(Equation 2)}$$

provided we remember to express P in years and D in astronomical units.

Just to show how this works let's consider the nine major planets of the Solar system, and list for each the period of revolution in years and the distance from the Sun in astronomical units, (see Table 1). If, for each planet, you take the square of the value under P and the cube of the value under D you will find, indeed, that the two results are virtually identical.

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Table 1

Planet	P *(period of revolution in years)*	D *(distance in A.U.)*
Mercury	0.241	0.387
Venus	0.615	0.723
Earth	1.000	1.000
Mars	1.881	1.524
Jupiter	11.86	5.203
Saturn	29.46	9.54
Uranus	84.01	19.18
Neptune	164.8	30.06
Pluto	248.4	39.52

Of course, the period and distance of any given planet can be determined separately and independently by actual observation. The connection between the two, therefore, is interesting but not vital. However, what if we can't determine both quantities independently. Suppose, for instance, you imagined a planet between Mars and Jupiter at a distance of just 4 A.U. from the Sun. What would its period of revolution be? Or if you imagined a far, far distant planet, 6,000 A.U. from the Sun. What would *its* period of revolution be?

From Equation 2, we see that:

$$P = \sqrt{D^3} \qquad \text{(Equation 3)}$$

and therefore we can answer the questions easily. In the case of the planet between Mars and Jupiter, the period of revolution would be the square root of the cube of four, or just 8 years. As for the far distant planet, its period would be the square root of the cube of six thousand and that comes to 465,000 years.

You can work it the other way round, too, by converting Equation 2 into:

$$D = \sqrt[3]{P^2} \qquad \text{(Equation 4)}$$

You can then find out how distant from the Sun a planet must be to have a period of revolution of just 20 years, or just 1,000,000 years.

In the former case, you must take the cube root of the square of twenty and in the latter, the cube root of the square of one million. This gives you an answer of 7.35 A.U. for the first case and about 10,000 A.U. for the second.

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We can have a little fun, now by seeking extremes.* For instance how far out can a planet be and still be a member of the Solar system? The nearest star system to ourselves is Alpha Centauri which is 4.3 light-years away. Any planet which is as close as 2 light-years to the Sun must therefore be closer to the Sun than to any other star no matter what the plane of its orbit. It is safely in the Sun's grip and let's consider it the "farthest reasonable planet."

An astronomical unit is equal to about 93,000,000 miles while a light-year is equal to about 5,860,000,000,000 miles. Therefore, one light-year is equal to about 63,000 A.U. and our farthest reasonable planet is at a distance of about 126,000 A.U. From Equation 3, then, we can see that the period of the farthest reasonable planet is about 45,000,000 years.

Let's ask next, how close a planet can be to the Sun? Let's ignore temperature and gas resistance and suppose that a planet can circle the Sun at its equator, just skimming its surface. We can call this a "surface planet."

The distance of a planet from the Sun is always measured center to center. If we consider the surface planet to be of negligible size, then its distance from the Sun is equal to the radius of the Sun which is 432,300 miles or 0.00465 A.U. Again using Equation 3, we can show that the period of such a body is 0.00031 years or 2.73 hours.

Next let's find out how fast a planet is moving, on the average, in miles per second (relative to the Sun.) To do so, let's first figure out how many seconds it takes the planet to make a complete turn in its orbit. We already have that period in years (P). In each year, there are about 31,557,000 seconds. Therefore the period of the planet in seconds is 31,557,000 P.

An astronomical unit is, as I said before, about 93,000,000 miles. We have the distance of a planet in astronomical units (D), so that the distance in miles is 93,000,000 D. What we really need, at this point, however, is the length of the orbit itself. If we assume the orbit to be an exact circle (which is approximately true) then its length is equal to its distance from the Sun, multiplied by twice "pi." The value of "pi" is 3.1416 and twice that is 6.2832. If we multiply that by the distance of the planet in miles, we get the length of the planetary orbit in miles, and that is 584,000,000 D.

To find the average velocity of a planet in miles per second, we must divide the length of the orbit in miles (584,000,000 D) by the dura-

* *In theory only, let me firmly state, lest my politics be misconstrued.*

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tion of its period of revolution in seconds (31,557,000 P). This gives us the value 18.5 D/P, for the mean orbital velocity of a planet.

We can simplify this by remembering that $P = \sqrt{D^3}$, according to Equation 3, so that we can write the velocity of a moving planet as $18.5\ D/\sqrt{D^3}$. Since $\sqrt{D^3}$ is equal to $\sqrt{D^2} \times D$, or $D\sqrt{D}$, we can write the velocity of a planet in orbit as equal to $18.5\ D/D\sqrt{D}$ or, in a final simplification, letting V stand for velocity:

$$V = 18.5/\sqrt{D} \qquad \text{(Equation 5)}$$

Remember that D represents the distance of a planet from the Sun in astronomical units. For the Earth the value of D is equal to 1 and the square root of D is also equal to 1. Therefore, the Earth's moves in its orbit at the average rate of 18.5 miles per second.

Since D is known for the other planets, the mean orbital velocity can be calculated without trouble by taking the square root of D and dividing it into 18.5. The result is Table 2:

Table 2

Planet	*Mean Orbital Velocity (miles per second)*
Mercury	29.8
Venus	21.7
Earth	18.5
Mars	15.0
Jupiter	8.2
Saturn	6.0
Uranus	4.2
Neptune	3.4
Pluto	2.9

Nowadays, velocity is often spoken of in "Mach numbers" where Mach 1 is equivalent to the speed of sound in air, Mach 2 to twice that speed and so on. At 0° C. the speed of sound is 1090 feet per second, or just about 0.2 miles per second. Our fastest airplanes are now moving along at Mach 2 and more, while an astronaut in orbit moves at about Mach 25 with respect to the Earth.

Compare this with Pluto, which moves (with respect to the Sun) at a mere Mach 14.5, only half the velocity of an astronaut. The Earth

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on the other hand is moving at a respectable Mach 93 and Mercury at a zippy Mach 149.

But let's try our extremes again.

The farthest reasonable planet, at 126,000 A.U., would have an orbital velocity of just about 0.052 miles per second, or about Mach 0.26. It's rather impressive that even at a distance of two light years, the Sun is still capable of lashing a planet into travelling at one-quarter the speed of sound.

As for the surface planet at a distance of 0.00465 A.U., its orbital velocity must be 271 miles per second, or Mach 1355. (Incidentally, the fastest conceivable velocity, that of light in a vacuum, is equal to about Mach 930,000; so watch out for anyone who talks casually about Mach 1,000,000. Bet him you can't reach Mach 1,000,000 and you'll win.)

Actually, a planet orbits about the Sun not in a circle but in an ellipse with the Sun at one focus (Kepler's first law). If you imagine a line connecting the Sun and the planet (a "radius vector") that line would sweep out equal areas in equal times. (This is Kepler's second law.) When the planet is close to the Sun, the radius vector is short and, to sweep out a given area, it must move through a comparatively large angle. When the planet is far from the Sun, the radius vector is long and, to sweep out the same area, needs to move through a smaller angle.

Thus, Kepler's second law describes the manner in which a planet's orbital velocity speeds up as it approaches the Sun and slows down as it recedes from it. I would like to point out one consequence of this *without going into mathematical detail.*

Imagine a planet suddenly increasing its velocity at some point in its orbit. The effect upon it would be analogous to that of throwing it away from the Sun. It would move away from the Sun at a steadily decreasing velocity, come to a halt and then start falling toward the Sun again.

This resembles the situation where one throws a stone into the air here on Earth, but since the planet is also revolving about the Sun, the effect is not a simple up-and-down motion, as it is in the case of the stone.

Instead, the planet revolves as it recedes from the Sun, its orbital velocity decreasing until it reaches a point that is precisely on the other side of the Sun from the point at which its velocity had suddenly increased. At this point on the other side of the Sun, its distance from

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the Sun has increased to a maximum (aphelion), and its orbital velocity has slowed to a minimum.

As the planet continues past the aphelion, it begins to approach the Sun again and its orbital velocity increases once more. When it returns to the place at which it had suddenly increased its velocity, it would be at that point in its new orbit which was nearest the Sun ("perihelion") and its orbital velocity would then be at a maximum.

The greater the velocity at a given perihelion distance, the more distant the aphelion and the more elongated the elliptical orbit. The elongation increases at a greater and greater rate with equal increments of speed because of the aphelion recedes, the strength of the Sun's gravity weakens and it can do less and less to prevent a still further recession.

Eventually, at some particular velocity at a given perihelion distance, the ellipse elongates to infinity—that is, it becomes a parabola. The planet continues along the parabolic orbit, receding from the Sun forever and never returning. This velocity is the "escape velocity" and it can be determined for any given planet by multiplying the mean orbital velocity in Table 2 by the square root of two; that is, by 1.414. The result is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Planet	*Escape Velocity (miles per second)*
Mercury	42.1
Venus	30.7
Earth	26.2
Mars	21.2
Jupiter	11.6
Saturn	8.5
Uranus	5.9
Neptune	4.8
Pluto	4.1

Thus, if the Earth, for any reason ever moved at 26.2 miles per second or more, it would leave the Solar system forever. (However, don't lose sleep over this. There is nothing, short of the invasion of another star, that can bring this about.)

Escape velocity for the farthest reasonable planet would be 0.23 miles per second while that for the surface planet would be 385 miles per second.

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Isaac Newton used Kepler's three laws as a guide in the working out of his own theory of gravitation. Once gravitation was worked out, Newton showed that Kepler's three laws could be deduced from it. In fact, he showed that Kepler's harmonic law as originally stated (see Equation 1) was only an approximation. In order to make it really exact, the masses of the Sun and the planets had to be taken into account. Equation 1 would have to be written in this way:

$$(M + m_1)P_1^2/(M + m_2)P_2^2 = D_1^3/D_2^3 \qquad \text{(Equation 6)}$$

where, as before, P_1 and P_2 are the periods of revolution of planet-1 and planet-2, D_1 and D_2 are their respective distances, and where the new symbols m_1 and m_2 are their respective masses. The symbol, M, represents the mass of the Sun.

As it happens, the mass of the Sun is overwhelmingly greater than the mass of any of the planets. Even the largest planet, Jupiter, has only 1/1000 the mass of the Sun. Consequently, the sum of M and m_1 or of M and m_2 can be taken, without significant inaccuracy, to be equal to M itself. Equation 6 can therefore be written as follows:

$$MP_1^2/MP_2^2 = D_1^3/D_2^3 \qquad \text{(Equation 7)}$$

The M's cancel and we have equation 1.

Of course, you may decide that since Newton's correct form works out to be just about exactly that of Kepler's approximate form, why not stick with Kepler who is simpler?

Ah, but Newton's form can be applied more broadly.

Jupiter's satellites had been discovered nine years before Kepler had announced his harmonic law. Kepler had work out that law entirely from the planets, yet when he studied Jupiter's satellite system, he found it applied to that, too.

Newton was able to show from his theory of gravitation that all three of Kepler's laws would apply to any system of bodies moving about some central body and his form of the harmonic law could be applied to two or more different systems at once.

Suppose, for instance, that planet-1 is circling Sun-1 and planet-2 is circling Sun-2. You can say that:

$$(M_1 + m_1)P_1^2/(M_2 + m_2)P_2^2 = D_1^3/D_2^3 \qquad \text{(Equation 8)}$$

where M_1 and M_2 are the masses of Sun-1 and Sun-2, where m_1, P_1

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and D_1 are the mass, period and distance of planet-1, and where m_2, P_2 and D_2 are the mass, period and distance of planet-2.

Now let's simplify that rather formidable assemblage of symbols. In the first place, we can take it for granted that the planet is always so much smaller than the Sun that its mass can be neglected. (This is not always true but it's true in the Solar system.) In other words, we can eliminate m_1 and m_2 and write Equation 8 as:

$$M_1P_1^2/M_2P_2^2 = D_1^3/D_2^3 \qquad \text{(Equation 9)}$$

Secondly, let's take the situation of the Earth revolving about the Sun as the norm and consider it to be the planet-2/Sun-2 system. We will measure all distances in astronomical units so that D_2^3 will equal 1. We will measure all periods of revolution in years so that P_2^2 will equal 1. Also we will measure the mass of all Suns in terms of the mass of our own Sun taken as 1. That means that M_2, the mass of the Sun, is equal to 1. Equation 9 becomes (dropping all subscripts)

$$MP^2 = D^3 \qquad \text{(Equation 10)}$$

where the symbols refer to the system other than the Earth/Sun system.

Suppose, for instance, that for the other Sun, we chose the Earth itself. (The Earth can serve as a central body around which smaller bodies, satellites, can revolve.) Suppose, further, that we wanted to calculate the period of revolution of a body circling the Earth at a mean distance of 237,000 miles. Since it is a period of revolution we are seeking, let us rewrite Equation 10 as:

$$P = \sqrt{D^3/M} \qquad \text{(Equation 11)}$$

The value of D is equal to 237,000 miles or 0.00255 A.U. The value of M is equal to the mass of the Earth expressed in Sun-masses. The Earth's mass is 1/332,500 of the Sun or 0.000003 Sun-masses. Substituting these values into Equation 11, we find that P, the period of revolution, comes out to 0.0745 years, or 27.3 days.

It happens that the Moon is at an average distance of 237,000 miles from the Earth, and it happens that its period of revolution (relative to the stars) is 27.3 days. Consequently, Kepler's harmonic law, as corrected by Newton, applies as much to the Earth-Moon system as to the Sun-planet system.

Furthermore, since the distance of the Moon from the Earth and the Moon's period of revolution are both known; and since the distance of the Earth from the Sun and the Earth's period of revolution are also

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both known; then if the mass of the Earth is known, the mass of the Sun can be calculated from Equation 9. Or, if the mass of the Sun is known, that of the Earth can be calculated.

The mass of the Earth was worked out by a method independent of the harmonic law in 1798. After that, the mass of any astronomical body which is itself at a known distance, and has a body circling it at a known distance and in a known period (all these quantities being easy to determine within the Solar system) can quickly be determined. For this reason, the masses of Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune, all with satellites, are known with considerable accuracy.

The masses of Mercury, Venus and Pluto, which lack known satellites can only be worked out by more indirect means and are known with considerably less accuracy. (It seems unreasonable that the mass of Venus is less well-known than that of Neptune when the latter is a hundred times farther from us, but now you see why.)

The masses of the various satellites (except for the Moon itself, which is a special case) are hard to determine for similar reasons. The harmonic law can't be used because their masses are drowned by the much larger mass of their primary, and no other method of mass-determination is as convenient or as accurate.

Periods, distances and orbital velocities of satellites, real or imagined can be worked out for any planet (real or imaginary) for which the mass is known, exactly as these quantities can be worked out for the planets with respect to the Sun.

Without going into arithmetical details I will list some data in Table 4, on the surface satellite for each planet; the theoretical situation where a satellite just skims the planetary equator. For this, use must be made of both mass and radius of the planet and these values are so uncertain in the case of Pluto that I will leave it out. In it place, for comparison purposes, I include the Sun.

If you consider Table 4, you will see that the period of a minimum satellite can be long for either of two reasons. As in the case of Mercury, the planet is light and its gravitational force is so weak that the satellite is moved along slowly and takes several hours to negotiate even the small length of the planetary equator.

On the other hand, as in the case of the Sun or of Jupiter, the gravitational force is great and the surface satellite whizzes along at high speed, but the central body is so large that even at high speed, several hours must elapse before the circuit is completed.

The period of the surface satellite is shortest when the planet packs as much mass as possible into as small a volume as possible. In other

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Table 4

Surface satellite

Planet	*Period (hours)*	*Period (minutes)*	*Orbital velocity (miles per sec.)*
Mercury	3.13	188	1.87
Venus	1.44	86½	4.58
Earth	1.41	84½	4.95
Mars	1.65	99	2.27
Jupiter	2.96	177	26.4
Saturn	4.23	254	15.6
Uranus	2.62	157	9.85
Neptune	2.28	137	11.2
Sun	2.73	165	271

words, the greater the density of the central body, the shorter the period of the surface satellite. Since Saturn is the least dense of the bodies listed in Table 4, it is not surprising that its surface satellite has the longest period.

As it happens, of all the sizable bodies of the Solar system, our own planet, Earth, is the densest. The period of its surface satellite is therefore the shortest.

An astronaut in orbit about the Earth, a hundred miles or so above the surface, is virtually a surface satellite and he completes his circuit of the earth in just under 90 minutes. An astronaut of no other sizable body in the Solar system could perform so speedy a circumnavigation.

How's that for a system-wide distinction for Gagarin, Glenn and company?

READER CONTEST: Progress Report

Response to our $200.00 short story contest (Dec. 1964) has been quite encouraging (despite comment such as that of Bruce W. Ronald, Dayton, Ohio: "It'll never work: *You can't combine computors/And the beastly Unicorn/Univac works binary/And the beast has but one horn.*") We feel confident that one of the manuscripts which has reached our office will competently fill the Univac-Unicorn gap. Winners will be announced in our April issue (on sale March 2).

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Calvin Demmon has appeared here before in very short lengths only—THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING IMPORTANT (March 1963), FRED (August 1963) and YOU HAVE TO STAY INSIDE (May 1964). His present contribution is scarcely a full-length novelet, of course, and it differs from the others in more than length. Mr. Demmon currently lives in Ingelwood, California and works as a clerk on the night shift at Los Angeles County's Juvenile Hall. But there is nothing juvenile about this story. There are probably not more than three people who have no interest in the question of the survival of the personality, and two of them are liars.

THE SWITCH

by Calvin Demmon

THE PROFESSOR'S VOICE DRONED on and on in the little loudspeaker. ". . . And when I was a very small child my mother promised to make me a gingerbread man, but she—" Jerry, who had heard the story before, snapped the toggle switch to "off," and the professor ceased to exist.

Acting impulsively then, Jerry, who really didn't like to be rude, switched the toggle switch on again. "—never made me one, at least I don't recall if she did, and now I suppose I'll never taste one. . . ."

"Professor," said Jerry, smiling slightly, "I have just interrupted you for six months."

"Oh?" said the professor. "Just now?"

"Yes. Right in the middle of it. You've told me about the gingerbread man before."

"What happened while I was off?" asked the professor, carefully, wistfully.

Jerry let his breath out slowly. "I was lying." His hand was still on the switch. "But let's not talk about your childhood any more for a while, okay?"

"Yes," said the professor, sadly. He was in a small grey can, with a speaker grill, microphone, and video unit in front. Or, actually, the professor wasn't in the can at all. He had died over a hundred years ago.

"You're the only one left, Professor," said Jerry.

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"Yes, I know." Behind the grill, the speaker crackled slightly. The professor had been an English instructor. Shortly before his death the patterns of his brain, every memory, every "yes" or "no" message in the intricate binary complex that had been his ego, his memories, his essence, his *self*, all of that had been programmed into the small computer in the can. When the professor had died, he had ceased to exist, but the entity in the can, the program which was the professor as much as the professor-in-the-body had been, the program which saw itself as a continuation of the old, as having existed in the flesh for eighty years and then having jumped into the can, that entity-program "lived"—while the toggle switch was on.

"In the last century, Professor, you've been on for about ten years. You're on right now because I wanted to consult you about something—I want you to tell me what you can about Robert Benchley."

"Robert Benchley," said the professor, and the speaker sighed again. "That goes back." The professor had gained his electronic immortality because of his knowledge—in some cases gained as the result of close personal friendships—about the famous literary figures of the twentieth century. He was allowed to function now when some student needed information for a research paper, or when some historian or biographer needed to fill in gaps, to obtain facts which had somehow not been preserved in the books. He was a living—if you could call it living—connection with the past, a bridge from the twentieth century to the twenty-first, available at the flip of a switch. He was, had been, a scientific wonder; he was now reduced to answering questions about his friends from the inside of a grey can. "Robert Benchley, immortalized in a can, would have kept the world laughing for a hundred years. You wouldn't have turned him off because you'd have laughed too hard, and I bet he'd figure out some way to squirt water in your face."

"Do you want to type?" asked Jerry. He hoped that the professor would type the information out; he was patient, but he was tired of talking to the can.

"Yes," said the professor softly. "I suppose so."

Jerry plugged the typewriter into a panel on top of the can. It jerked into action, typebars flying up to strike the paper in a rapid series of mechanical smacks. There was no keyboard on the typewriter; it was strictly a read-out, made for the professor and the other cans, although there were no other cans now. The professor didn't need a keyboard; he had no hands.

Clack clack, smack smack. The typebars flew up and crashed against the paper. Jerry read. ". . . and short-subject motion pictures, his own essays dramatized. He died of a cerebral hemorrhage, in 1945.

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It happened so suddenly that I first heard about it on the radio. . . ." The typewriter continued, jerking along rapidly, whirring back on a new line and then jerking along again. It finally stopped.

"That's about it," said the speaker quietly from behind the grill-cloth.

"Thank you, Professor," said Jerry. "I'll let you know how this all comes out. I'll let you read the article."

"Thanks."

"Well," said Jerry, who did not believe in postponing the inevitable, even when the inevitable was mildly unpleasant, "Well, I'm going to have to turn you off now, Professor."

"Yes," said the can. "I know."

"You won't notice," said Jerry. "When someone turns you on again it will be as if I'd never turned you off."

"I know," said the professor. He paused. There was a faint pop from the speaker as a tiny relay kicked on. "In the old days—in the old days they left me on all the time, I chatted with the people who visited the museum, people used to stand around and talk to me and watch me type and—"

"Professor," Jerry said. He was beginning to feel a little guilty, a little sorry for the teacher in the can, for the electronic authority which insisted on having the—well, the personality—of an old man, and he resented the feeling; there was just nothing he could do about it. "Professor, people just don't come to museums any more. Look at the dust. You'd be lonely here alone, you wouldn't have anybody to talk to."

"I could *think*," said the professor. "I don't even have time to *think*. You—and the others before you—you only turn me on when you want to find out about something; I haven't had a minute to myself for the last eight months." He said the final words self-consciously; he knew that Jerry knew that his "eight months" were a matter of nearly ninety years.

"I suppose it *has* been hectic," Jerry said. "You don't sleep, do you?"

"No, I don't have to sleep—" here he sounded a trifle proud "—but I'd like to be able to gather my thoughts around me before somebody, some future pupil of yours, comes here and asks me a lot of silly questions about Mickey Spillane." The can trembled slightly as a worn tape spool somewhere inside spun into action, whirred its information into the professor's consciousness, and stopped again. "Jerry, turning me off doesn't give me a rest; it just hurtles me into the future and snaps me up in front of somebody with a lot of questions. I've been jumping from scholar to scholar for ninety years. I'd like to be by myself for a while. I'd like to be able to think; there are a lot of things I'd like to think about."

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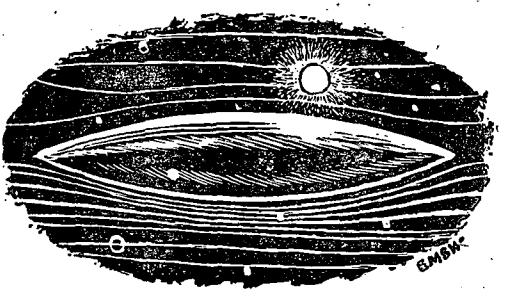
Jerry's hand, which had been reaching for the switch again, dropped to his side. He looked at the little can, grey like the hair of the professor must have been grey when he died. "Professor. . . ." he said. He turned suddenly towards the door. "I'll give you twenty minutes."

He turned out the lights and left the room, locking the door behind him.

A sigh, produced from four subminiature audio centers in a grey can, escaped into the darkness—this time a sigh of contentment, as the professor, alone in the museum, began to Think.



LOOK UP

Look up, above the Saturn's prow
And past the sputnik-lanes
Where captains venture even now
To chart new reefs and mains,

Look beyond lands of fume and stone
To where the endless deep
Promises yet to be a zone
Where men may sow and reap;

Look! Waiting for our empery
Where stars like beacons stand—
The spacious island-worlded sea,
The ports of Morrowland.

—KAREN ANDERSON

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For the benefit of the new readers who have taken advantage of our wizard subscription plans, let us say that Miriam Allen deFord is the widow of Maynard Shipley (writer, labor authority, and long-time friend and correspondent of Charles Fort) and herself a well-known writer of fact and fiction. In this latter branch of letters she has covered not only Science Fiction but the field of mystery and crime as well. It is appropriate that Miss deFord—who was not *born in the 1690's, as a typo of ours once had it!—is even now bringing out an anthology of stories combining SF and crime, for her most recent tale for us combines them both, too. Mervin Alspaugh was fed up with his wife. Having taken almost all that he could, the only thing left for him to take was Steps. Herewith a new composition on a classical theme.*

THE ABSOLUTELY PERFECT MURDER

by Miriam Allen deFord

IT WAS A QUIET, DOMESTIC EVENING in the spring of 2146. Mervin Alspaugh and his wife Doreen, snugly ensconced in the viewing room of their living-yacht moored to the roof of a building in lower Manhattan, were separately occupied in private entertainment. Both, with hearing-plugs in their ears, directional conversion-glasses before their eyes, and Sensapills percolating through their blood-streams, were watching, listening to, smelling, tasting, and feeling their favorite telecasts. Doreen as usual was absorbed in advertisements of jewels, furs, new synthetics, and cosmetics; Mervin had switched on a science-ad program. (All telecasts, of course, consisted exclusively of advertisements, aimed at the individual interests of the viewers.) But he was *not* absorbed: under his surface perception his constant preoccupation, which was becoming an obsession, dug into him as always.

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How could he murder Doreen and get away with it?

This project, which had begun as a faint wistful dream a year or two ago, had now become the substratum of all his thinking. It was threatening to interfere with his work as a cybernattendant, and that would never do: it must be either fulfilled or repressed.

Now that his situation was clearly and sharply in his mind, he wondered often why he had ever married her. A combination of propinquity, lack of assertiveness, and loneliness, he supposed. The propinquity had become nerve-wracking, the lack of assertiveness had made him the victim of a nagging, bullying woman, and he no longer looked upon loneliness as an evil, but longed for it as a thirsty man for water. The truth was that he was not the marrying type, and he should have realized it and stayed out.

Divorce? Not a chance. He had no grounds whatever, no matter how lenient the divorce laws had become—not even incompatability, since Doreen had long ago substituted her interests for his and seen to it that he was properly involved in them; these blessed evening hours of separate telecast programs were her only concession. And nothing would have persuaded her to divorce him; she was completely, blandly satisfied with what to him was a persistent torture. The only time he had timidly and indirectly proposed the idea, she had laughed in his face. And if he merely left her without divorce, the police would find him and drag him back.

So there was nothing left, to avoid the wreckage of his own life, except to murder her.

But here again he was up against a seemingly impenetrable barrier. Never in his life had he physically attacked another human being; his knowledge of weapons was non-existent; and he shrank in distaste from the slyness of poison—even if he had known how to obtain any. More frustrating still, even if somehow he could find the means and the courage, there would be a body—a body bigger and heavier than his own—to dispose of. He had not the remotest idea how that could be accomplished. And if it weren't—if he were apprehended, accused, and convicted, as he most certainly would be—what kind of future would that leave him? There was no longer danger of his being executed, as in the old barbarous days, and the Rehabilitation Institutes would probably have seemed like heaven to inmates of even the most advanced prisons of a century or two earlier. But the essence of any imprisonment is the negation of liberty, the enforced absence of privacy, the prohibition of self-direction, and Mervin Alspaugh could see no profit in exchanging one kind

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of imprisonment for another, for years or for the rest of his existence.

No, there was no way out that he dared risk. And yet he could not endure much longer being tied to a woman he had come to hate.

A groan escaped him: fortunately Doreen, ear-plugged, failed to hear it. He forced his attention back to the program.

A white-coated man, wearing the full synthetic wig of the research scientist, was doing a come-on for the newest of scientific triumphs.

"Aren't we all honestly becoming bored," he was saying, "with what we might call horizontal travel—of 40-minute trips to the uttermost reaches of our little planet, or week-end tours around the solar system and vacation cruises in outer space? Well, a new thrill is possible for those of adventurous spirit—and, I must add, of financial means." (He laughed ingratiatingly, and millions of viewers receiving his message transliterated into their own tongues smiled dutifully at his little joke.) "You can be among the first to experience what might be termed vertical travel.

"Now at last you can not only visit the moon or Mars or Alpha Centauri, but you can travel back into the past. Yes, folks, public time travel has finally come true.

"You can witness the burial of Tutankhamen, the assassination of Julius Caesar, the coronation of Napoleon, the inauguration of the first World President in 2065—and not just see and hear and feel them on a screen, but actually *be* there at the real event. You can visit your native city as you remember it, even if years ago it was razed to provide room for a Redevelopment Complex. You can hunt extinct wild animals in a natural forest, fish in a long ago diverted river. You can relive your own youth.

"You can see the world as it was in any period of the past, behold once more those dear to you who have died before you, make history a living thing."

Mervin Alspaugh sat transfixed. Theoretically, he knew, time travel to the past had been possible for at least five years, ever since the startling discoveries of Haffen and Ngumbo. Carefully trained temperonauts—Okimatu Figlietti was the first—had made journeys up to ten years back and returned safely. But the project had been incredibly complicated, and inexorably secret. The computers in his own department had played a small part, very hush-hush, in the earliest developments, or he would not even have known of them.

But that the range of the Time Transporter had been so far extended, that the general public could participate, that time-travel could now be offered on the same

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basis as space-travel—that indeed was something new, and the white-coated scientist on the screen was making the first announcement.

A sudden warmth crept through Mervin's chest. Oh, he knew it wouldn't be as easy as the come-on indicated: it would be ferociously expensive, hedged about with all sorts of restrictions, all sorts of rules about secrecy, non-interference, non-liability of the dispatching agency—

But if his life's savings were enough—if he agreed to any and all conditions—if somehow, when he got to a selected time and place, he could escape, lose himself forever and never, never come back to a time with Doreen in it—

He sighed deeply, deflated by common sense. How could he earn his living in a time that did not yet know the only profession for which he was equipped? How could he hope not to be dragged back by the authorities of his own time as soon as he did not return at the scheduled moment? How could he endure the primitive conditions of any century before his own?

The little warmth died. He wrenched his attention back to the tele-ad.

"Now," said the speaker genially, "I know there are all kinds of questions and objections that will immediately occur to you. We are not in a position yet to offer luxury cruises in time as you know them in space. By the very nature of the mechanism of the Time Transporter, there will be strict limitations on where you can go and what you can do when you get there." Mervin felt himself nodding in sad agreement. "At first this is going to be a project barred to the very old, the disabled physically, and those of modest means.

"But just one week from today, the first Time Transportation offices will open in every city on earth. Your local visinews will give you the details. You will be able to get full information there. And some of those whom I am addressing now will soon discover for themselves the marvels of the most wonderful journey Man has ever made. Some day it will be as common to spend holidays in the past as it is now to visit a friend in Lunapolis. And some other day, not too far away, we shall be able to visit the future, just as, within another week, we shall be able to visit the past.

"Now let me save the energies of our Information Clerks by answering at once some of the questions that will most probably arise."

Mervin listened apathetically while most of the objections that he had already considered were outlined and disposed of. It was no use. There was no way out for him. He was still confronted by the urgent need to eliminate Doreen.

The scientist smiled, his perfect permateeth gleaming.

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"And in conclusion," he said, "let me disabuse your minds of a notion that may sound amusing to some of you, but that has been brought up seriously over and over again in the course of our studies.

"No, you *can't* go back into the past and kill your grandfather, as people used to fancy, for the very good reason that if he *had* been killed, you wouldn't be alive now to make the trip. You would never have been born. So—"

Mervin lost track. He turned off the set. For a long time he sat, his eyes closed, thinking. . . .

This was 2146. Doreen, in a weak moment at the beginning of their marriage, had confessed that she was seven years older than he. That made her 52. So she had been born in 2094.

For the first time he was grateful for her garrulous, egocentric recitals about her undistinguished family. "I was an only child," she had droned so many times. "I was born the year after my parents were married, and my father died suddenly when I was only four."

At first he toyed with the idea of going back to a time when her father had been a child. It would be so much easier to overpower a child. But he knew he couldn't bring himself to harm a little boy. It was hard enough, driven as he was to utter despair, to confront another grown man.

But at whatever cost, he must nerve himself somehow to that. He began to calculate. Doreen's father and mother were married in 2093. Give it another year to be safe—he would aim for 2092, nine years before he himself had been born.

Even he was taken aback by what the journey cost. But by almost wiping out his bank account—the secret one he had managed to keep hidden from Doreen—he could just make it. He agreed to all the conditions, signed all the papers. He acquired clothing of the proper fashion, studied intensively the booklet on a half century's differences, to avoid suspicion.

He got his vacation changed to June, instead of the usual time in September: he couldn't stand waiting that long. He steeled himself to tell Doreen—at the last possible minute—that the department had ordered him to take his holiday earlier this year, and that therefore (since her own would still come in September) he must go away without her. It was a nasty scene, but he was desperate enough to go through it without giving in. Of course he lied about his destination: by the time her letter-tapes were returned from the false address he gave, there would be no need for him to worry any more.

On a day in June, 2092, Mervin Alspaugh found himself in New York, then still a separate city from both Philadelphia and Boston.

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He knew where to go—he had listened to enough long-winded reminiscences. He found the apartment house without difficulty, only a bit confused until he remembered that there had still been surface transportation in cities in those days.

It was an ordinary 40-story formaglass apartment building of those years before most people had been crowded out of Manhattan except for the dwellers in moored living-yachts. It looked about as he had expected. What did surprise him was a concourse of small children—five or six of them—gathered on the stoop and in the doorway, playing. Mervin Alspaugh viewed them with disfavor; in his day the neighborhood robonurse would have put them to bed an hour before. Presumably their parents lived in the building and let them play outside till dark. He glanced at them sourly as he mounted the steps. A little girl, surely not more than four—a pudgy, unattractive child with sallow skin and a mean mouth—made a face at him and gave vent to a loud razzberry. Apparently she was the leader of the mob; the others immediately stopped their game and followed suit.

He ignored them; he had other things on his mind. He pressed the button for 1410.

He was face to face with the moment of truth.

Thanks to Doreen and her fond memories, he knew that Roger Tatum in his bachelor days had lived alone in the same flat to which he had taken his bride, and in which Doreen had spent her childhood until her father died. His life before and after his marriage, she had often remarked admiringly, had been "just like clockwork." He had got to the office by nine, was home again by half-past 18, after an early dinner at a nearby restaurant, then was home all evetening to video lectures at the University of the Air, preparing himself for promotion in his job, and was in bed every night by half-past 22. "Why, even when he was going with my mother, he never went out with her except at week-ends."

And then she would invariably add: "He was a *serious* man, my father, always trying to improve himself. Not like you, with your head forever in the clouds."

An excellent regimen—for Mervin's present purpose. And when he rang the bell downstairs, it was just 19.53.

The buzzer sounded promptly. If the paragon of perfection was to be interrupted in his studies, then apparently he wanted the interruption disposed of quickly.

As Mervin mounted the escalator to the 14th floor he fingered nervously through his pocket what he thought of always, in capitals, as The Weapon.

He had pondered longest of all

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about this. Often, even as he made his preparations for the journey, it had seemed an insoluble problem —just as it had been when he had dreamed of eliminating Doreen directly. A blaster? He had never fired one in his life, and wouldn't know how. A knife? A blackjack? His blood turned cold. From Doreen's sarcastic comparisons—what a memory she must have had at four—he knew only too well how inferior he was in size and strength to Roger Tatum. So strangling or a blow was out of the question.

Only one thing that he knew of could kill a man instantly and painlessly, and that had not yet been invented in 2092. At first it had seemed impossible that he could get hold of one even in 2146. Mervin shuddered as he remembered the depths to which he, a man of hitherto blameless life, had descended to get The Weapon. It had cost him all that was left of his secret bank account, and he had risked his own life by venturing after dark into the notorious inner reaches of Central Park. (Overtime work, he had told Doreen, and she had been too indifferent to question him.)

He had succeeded, though he had had nightmares ever since. In his pocket, as the escalator carried him to his waiting prey, was a charged freeze hypo. Heaven knew from whom it had been stolen by the drug-ridden derelict who had furtively thrust it, wrapped in a dirty plastic rag, into his hand in exchange for the thick wad of credit notes.

Part of the Time Transport agreement he had signed was a prohibition against carrying arms into the past. But no one could have imagined that in this case the little Sleepwel pillbox everybody carried held instead that tiny, deadly needle, which once it penetrated the skin immediately froze its victim, reduced his temperature to an incredible degree, turned his blood to ice, and held its grip until no recovery was possible.

He took the box gingerly out of his pocket, opened it with care, and extracted the freeze hypo by its safe end.

He rang the doorbell of Apartment 1410, and in a minute the door opened.

He would have known anywhere that it was Doreen's father. The same cold grey eyes, the same tight mouth, the same scowl, and the same grating voice as the man snapped: "Yes?"

"Mr. Tatum—Mr. Roger Tatum?"

"Yes. What do you want?"

"I have a package for you." The package—plastic and Sealfast containing *nothing*—was under his arm.

Tatum glared suspiciously.

"I'm expecting no package. I haven't ordered anything."

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Doreen's meanness again—somebody must be trying to put something over, extort money somehow.

"There's no charge."

Expertly Mervin Alspaugh proffered the dummy parcel. Over and over, while Doreen snored, he had practiced holding the freeze hypo unseen under it.

Tatum stretched forth his hand grudgingly to take it. The needle went through his palm.

Without even a gasp, he turned rigid and then fell.

Mervin wheeled to leave. There was no need to touch the icy body—death was always instantaneous. He paused only to recover the hypo, harmless now that it had spent its charge. For a moment he thought he heard footsteps inside the apartment, hurrying to the door at the sound of Tatum's fall. (Perhaps father's studious bachelor evenings had not been so solitary as his doting daughter had fancied.) But he was on the escalator and out of sight before anyone could have glimpsed him.

The children were still gathered on the stoop. The pudgy little girl grimaced at him and yelled "Yah!" But a voice called from a downstairs window, and when Mervin reached the corner and looked back he saw the children, summoned, entering the building one by one for their belated bedtime.

Weak with a horrid churning mixture of terror, relief, and ecstasy, Mervin dared not linger longer in 2092. He hurried to the center where the Time Transporter, invisible to others because it did not yet exist in that era, waited for its passenger. If they wondered at the other end why he had returned so soon, he would say that life 54 years earlier had proved too uncomfortable, and probably they would be only too glad to get the Transporter back early for the next traveler.

Everything went smoothly. As he taxicoptered from the Time Transportation office to the living-yacht—now all his again, haven of peace as it had been in his happy days before Doreen—the horror of having killed another human being, the fear of being caught before he escaped, were swallowed up in the rapture of his triumph. He savored his new freedom with delight.

Roger Tatum had died two years before his daughter could have been born. There had never been a Doreen.

Delirious with happiness, he matched the door-pattern and stepped into his home—*his* home only, forevermore.

And then he saw a light in the viewing room.

Shaking, he burst into it.

Doreen sat there, watching her telecast. Ears plugged, eyes encased, she did not even notice him.

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And in that awful moment, Mervin Alspaugh suddenly realized the truth.

Never in the world, as long as he lived, would he be able to get hold of enough money again to buy another freeze hypo, or to take another trip, to an earlier date, on the Time Transporter. Nor had he been wrong in thinking he had heard footsteps running to Tatum's door: he *had*—they were the footsteps of Mrs. Tatum.

And as for that pudgy, greedy-faced little girl on the stoop—now he knew why he had taken so instant a dislike to her—not seven years his senior, but eleven—at least eleven—

Doreen, that insatiable, incorrigible woman, had lied about her age!

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THE PLACEBO EFFECT *by Theodore L. Thomas*

WHEN A PATIENT RESPONDS TO medication or treatment that cannot have a direct effect on his illness, you have the placebo effect. Healers have used the placebo effect for thousands of years. When stomach cramps are cured with ground bat hair, when a backache is cured with a sugar pill, you have the placebo effect in operation. A placebo may consist of a dose of harmless vitamin or an active drug in an amount too small to be of direct medical value. It may be a harmless injection, or sham electric treatment, or even fake surgery. It could be the laying on of hands. A recent guess says that forty percent of medical prescriptions are placebos.

Research on the placebo effect shows remarkable results. Placebos controlled the sugar level in the blood of over half of a group of diabetics. They improved almost all of a group of peptic ulcer patients. They reduced the pain in patients after major surgery. They brought about symptomatic relief in rheumatoid and degenerate arthritis. Up and down the line, placebos have done the work of the actual drugs, even better, in some instances. The inevitable happened, though. Placebos sometimes had the same side symptoms as the drugs themselves, dizziness, nausea, fever, swollen ankles, and all the rest.

It was found that the conditions under which the placebo was administered to the patient were important; a white coat—or no coat—on the doctor would have a bearing. A myriad of factors was uncovered. Even animals responded to the placebo effect. Something certainly was at work, something beyond the patient's imagination.

Well, it is obvious to suggest that the placebo effect could conceivably cure cancer. Or, give a man a shot under the proper circumstances and tell him he will live forever, and see what happens. The placebo effect would seem to have far greater possibilities than these. Why waste money on the search for actual drugs and vaccines and improved surgical procedures? Put the money in research on the placebo effect. If the mechanism of the placebo effect could be understood, there would be no need of anything else, not really. Any man could be cured of any thing so long as he was administered *something* under the proper circumstances.

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Here, with curious echoes of Charles Fort and Gilbert and Sullivan, is a curious story by the author of NO PLACE LIKE WHERE (F&SF, May 1964). Since acceptance of it a while back, we have heard nothing of him; fortunately, his name is not Ambrose, else we would really *worry. Have you ever felt, observing of a clear evening "the welkin all throbbing and white", that maybe somebody (or something) up there* doesn't *like you? Have you ever been aware of sudden dislikes on the part of other people which the use or non-use of patent soaps and mouthwashes have nothing to do with? If so, friend, you may be a victim of a dread affliction indeed, viz.:*

THE DEADEYE DICK SYNDROME

by Robert M. Green, Jr.

TOM FISH TINGLED FROM SCALP to soles under the stars of the high desert and wondered if he had a fever. If so, it was an odd sort of fever. No chills; no heat. The stars, never so clear and bright-hard anywhere in the world, trailed invisible filaments that touched the earth, sparking and tingling as they swept or whipped his body, but there was no pain—only a see-saw between exhilaration and skin-jumping jitters.

It would be dawn in less than an hour, and Tom knew that his wife, Marta, would be wild with worry by now, even though he had left a note on the bedside table when he tiptoed in at midnight after his interview with the fruitcake:

"No ad. No story. Look, babe, I'm all right but something has got me jumpy. I've got to drive around or walk around or bay at the moon or something until whatever it is lets go, and I don't think Sominex will do it for me. Got to pick up an ad from Penney's and lay it out first thing in the morning. Then I'll sneak home for a cup of coffee. I love you."

He hadn't really expected to get an ad from the fruitcake, and

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he certainly wasn't upset now that he hadn't gotten one. There was the problem of how in the devil he was going to make a suitable story out of the interview, because, ad or not, Uppmann was going to want a story to go with the fruitcake's picture, and it most surely couldn't be the fun sort of feature story he could have gotten away with when he was with the Idaho Statesman in Boise. Ivan Uppmann took the fruitcake seriously. Or maybe it was Ivan's wife. She was the kind of person who would go to a chiropractor even if he charged as much as an M.D., her emotional problems were being resolved by the Institute of Dianetics, and Tom suspected she had an orgone box somewhere about the house.

Anyway, Ivan was the boss, and if he said do a story on the fruitcake and do it straight, Tom would have to work it out somehow, though it was going to look awfully damned ridiculous, even in a weekly paper which wasn't held as strictly to cool-headed journalistic standards as a city daily. The merchants would snicker. Well, Ivan didn't have to face the merchants; he was in the shop all day. That was Tom's problem.

Still, that wasn't why he was jumpy. Could it have been too much black coffee at the fruitcake's apartment? Tom couldn't remember having had more than three cups. Besides, the feeling he had now was unlike any case of simple coffee jitters he had ever known. It was bone-deep and almost tangible. There was a sighing singing all around him and *through* him, as though he were an Aeolian harp hung in the breeze; yet there was no breeze. Moreover he was in the grip of some substantial emotion.

But what emotion? Fear?

No, not really. He had felt amusement, and, for some ununderstandable reason, defiance, toward the end of the interview, when the fruitcake had said:

"Go home quickly, and if you can go to sleep, do so. Take sleeping pills if you have them. If not, busy yourself with some tedious chore. Clean out your cellar. Balance your books. Don't go out onto high hills or wide deserts under the stars. Above all, beware of exaltation, because that is only another name for *hubris*, and it will invite the attention of the gods. On a night like tonight, your soul, if you have one, should crouch like a little mouse."

Tom kept a straight face. "The cosmic fishermen are out tonight, I take it. I suppose I'm in season."

The fruitcake sighed. "Why is Charles Fort remembered now only for one arch little conjecture that we are being fished for? I'm not talking about *disappearances*. That isn't the meaning of the radio blips. It means nothing that your particular surname is Fish. You

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might even be named Ambrose, and the blips would have no more meaning for you than for anyone else. There are many ways of collecting non-Ambroses as well as Ambroses. Everyone is potentially in season, but not necessarily to be caught on a cosmic hook and whisked off into another dimension as Ambrose Bierce was."

"I don't see what difference it makes," said Tom. "If I were a fancy cake in a bakery shop and the baker said to the customer, 'Shall I wrap it up for you to take home?' I wouldn't be much consoled if the customer said, 'No thanks; I'll eat it here.'"

"That's very good indeed. Fort would have loved it. But it's beside the point. We know, those of us who have taken pains to correlate the pertinent data, that when the radio blips reach a peak of intensity, as they have tonight, someone or something from another dimension or another curve of space-time is close to us, breathing down our necks, sorting us out, rating us, branding us, picking and choosing from among us. But this does not mean that they or it must choose between only two alternatives: whisking us off the face of the earth or devouring us on the spot. There are many choices. There is, for example, the Deadeye Dick syndrome. You know Deadeye Dick, of course."

"It never occurred to me to take him seriously," said Tom. "I'm not a Gilbert and Sullivan addict. My mother used to scrub me and drag me off to watch the D'Oyly Carte company whenever they came to Salt Lake City, but I was too young, I guess. They might as well have been singing in German."

"What do you remember about Deadeye Dick?"

"Wasn't he the sailor everyone hated on sight? It seems to me every time he opened his mouth everyone on stage would sort of recoil in revulsion. But he was really a nice guy who just wanted to be helpful. It was like he had the evil eye or something. I remember laughing at that because it wasn't set to music and you could get some idea of what was going on. But it was just comedy."

"Surely, Mr. Fish, you don't believe that W. S. Gilbert merely delved into his imagination to discover Deadeye Dick. You should *read* Gilbert, undistorted by screaming sopranos and booming baritones. He was a Fortean before Fort. He knew there were forces on the prowl for man, forces that owned man in the same way a man owns cattle and sheep and dogs, forces that come close to the earth at times to check up on their flocks and herds, and single out certain souls to be their own prize pets. You know yourself what happens when a man takes a wild animal away from its own kind and fondles it and tames it. He does more than put that animal in his

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own thralldom. He alienates it from the fellows. A mother rabbit in the wild will destroy its own children if they are taken up and fondled and enthralled by men and then set loose again. This is what happened to Deadeye Dick, or the thousands of not-so-funny Deadeye Dicks whom Gilbert observed and turned into comedy. They had been singled out by the force behind the radio blips; they had been fondled and enthralled —and then set loose again. There was an aura of evil about them when they moved among their own people—a suggestion that they had committed or were about to commit some monstrous, unspeakable crime. A lesser observer than Fort would have looked upon them as tragic figures, but Gilbert was not a lesser man than Fort, and he knew that there is a point of pointlessness beyond tragedy which is absurdity—or comedy. Incidentally, don't look in the newspapers for a scientific explanation of tonight's radio blips. Every radioscope in the world has registered them, but no astronomer in his right mind will admit the existence of a cosmic presence he cannot see through lenses."

"Still, what's the point?"

"A rhesus monkey in a laboratory would need human wisdom to see that his life was absurd. He would need Fortean wisdom to see that there was indeed a purpose in his life—but not for him."

Only a hopelessly solemn man would be spooked by such palaver. Possibly the fruitcake himself was spooked by it; he was solemn enough. But Tom was not solemn. Besides, he had skipped judiciously through "The Book of the Damned," and he knew that while Charles Fort might have uttered such words with a straight face, he would have, immediately thereafter, slapped his knee, guffawed, and belted down another beer.

If Tom had felt even a passing thrill of fright, why would he have been standing here on this high Oregon desert, looking eastward over the great curve of the Snake and the wide flat Boise River basin, waiting for the sun to come up over the Boise Mountains, and thumbing his nose at radio blips.

Thumbing his nose too at Melanicus.

The words from "The Book of the Damned" came to him as clearly as though he had the printed page in front of him, blue-greenly illumined; yet he had never taken the trouble to memorize them or even to ponder them briefly:

"Melanicus."

"That upon the wings of a super-bat, he broods over this earth and over other worlds, perhaps deriving something from them; hovers on wings, or wing-like appendages, or planes that are hundreds of miles from tip to tip—a super-evil thing that is exploiting us. By

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Evil I mean that which makes us useful.

"He obscures a star. He shoves a comet. I think he's a vast, black, brooding vampire."

Tom knew suddenly that what he felt was not fear but a desperate yearning to enfold or be enfolded by whatever it was. Everyone knew that Charles Fort was just putting us on. He revelled in the knowledge that all of his disciples were fruitcakes. Why then did he keep coming back to the sentence:

"Vast black thing poised like a crow over the moon?"

Had Fort stood one starry night on a Bronx rooftop, sensing the blotting out of starlight and not daring to look up—for fear of seeing it there—for utter dread of *not* seeing it there? Had he too listened to radio blips revealing the presence of a huge body, undetectable by telescope, in collision with the earth?

Suddenly the rim of the sun peeped over Shafer Butte, back of Boise, nearly 50 miles to the east, and Tom knew he was being set free to go back to town. The tops of the hills rimming the Boise basin sparkled with red, silver, and gold, but the great basin itself was a vast lake of night as Tom drove his car down into it. By the time he was halfway down the slope, however, the sunlight had spilled into the valley, accenting the green, yellow and blue checkerboard squares of the irrigated land, and Tom was descending into the Land of Oz, almost hysterical with unaccountable euphoria.

When he reached the town of Squampus, roughly in the center of the great flat basin, he was, at once, out of Oz. The good people of Squampus had been planting trees since before the turn of the Century, thanks to irrigation water, and the thick summer foliage over every lawn completely screened any possible view of mountains. One might have been in Flatsville, Nebraska.

The manager of Penney's store was out for coffee; so Tom picked up the ad from an assistant manager, Jerry Bagg, an affable young man who was usually ready to relay to Tom two or three good, new dirty jokes picked up from travelling salesmen.

Tom looked at the ad lay-out. A lousy 3 columns by 6 inches. He had counted on at least half a page this week.

Jerry wasn't being affable today.

"Something wrong with the ad, Fish?"

"Well, I kind of thought—"

"We aren't a charitable institution, Fish. Your paper isn't pulling for us."

"That's not fair, Jerry. Appleton told me he had a good run from that swimsuit ad last week."

"Mr. Appleton is a very generous man. Actually we plugged swimsuits on radio too. We've de-

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cided to put three-fourths of our usual newspaper advertising budget into radio. I think we ought to put it all in radio. I believe we could advertise Cadillacs for ten cents apiece on the front page of your paper without a single nibble. But as I said, Mr. Appleton is a very generous man."

"What's with you Jerry? You have to be putting me on."

"Take it up with Mr. Appleton. I *told* him you'd come in here with your usual offensive line of talk."

Tom laughed. "Okay. I'll go along with the gag. Say, Jerry, by the way—did you ever hear of Deadeye Dick? 'Pirates of Penzance.' "

Jerry flashed Tom a look of sheer hatred. " 'H.M.S. Pinafore.' I knew you were a damn fraud, Fish. That Ivy League gentleman-and-scholar pose; how long did you expect to hoax us poor Squampus yokels?"

"Okay, I'm a fraud. I don't know nuttin'. Tell me about Deadeye Dick."

"Maybe you're not busy, but I am." Jerry turned his back and walked away.

Tom shrugged and walked out to the street. He was only a block from the shop, but he couldn't bring himself to go there yet. Ivan Uppmann would give him hell for bringing in a crummy 3 by 6 ad from Penneys. As though it was his fault. He decided to go a couple of blocks out of his way and drop in at City Hall. There might be an item or two on the police blotter.

Chief Swenkert was a good cop. Squampus was lucky to have him, and wouldn't have had him if he hadn't been caught up in a bribe scandal on the Coast, where he had been a big city police lieutenant. Swenkert had admitted to Tom that he was guilty as hell. Some gamblers had discovered his price, fifty grand, in return for which he had developed some convenient blind spots relative to certain wee-hours establishments.

"That's my price for illegal gambling and booze—and maybe for some unorganized prostitution," he said. "For real crime, from heist up to murder, it runs all the way from 500 grand to a billion. Under 50 grand I'm 100 per cent honest; so I'm safe in Squampus, and the mayor and council know it."

Swenkert had always treated Tom with hearty respect, which Tom had returned. The press had clobbered the cop at the time of his fall from grace on the Coast, but he still regarded newspapermen with wry but rather amused affection, and whenever Tom came into headquarters he was in the habit of rising to greet him with the delighted look of one who had, until that moment, been starved for intelligent conversation.

He didn't rise today. When

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Tom walked into the office there were two patrolmen standing by the chief's desk, Junior Ricks and Pat Johnson, good jack-Mormons with whom Tom had always been on first-name terms. They said nothing to Tom; they looked first at their feet and then at Swenkert, who sat, hunched forward, with lips set tight and eyes glaring into Tom's. He tapped the edge of his desk with his pencil in a sort of dead-march rhythm.

"You've got a nerve coming in here, you sonofabitch," said Swenkert. "Frisk him, Junior."

"What's the matter with everyone today?" asked Tom.

"Check the hall, Pat," said Swenkert. "Then take a look up and down the street. I can't believe he'd just walk in here alone."

Tom backed away from Junior.

"Don't move, Fish," said Junior.

"See?" said Swenkert. "Now he's showing his true colors. I told you all along. Just give him enough rope, I said."

"Look," said Tom. "I don't know what this is all about, but I'm getting the hell out of here."

"Start walking, baby," said Swenkert, taking a 38 revolver out of his desk drawer. "Save the taxpayers the cost of a trial."

"Won't be no trial anyway," said Junior, patting Tom's pocket. "Soon as word gets out we got him locked up here, old Judge Lynch'll take over. Say, what do we do, Chief, if a bunch of good Squampus citizens come around fixing to string this fellow up? Do we have to risk our necks for *him*?"

"Not me," said Swenkert. "You boys can stick around if you want to. I've got plans for my old age."

"There's no gun on him far as I can tell," said Junior.

Pat came in.

"All quiet out there. Don't see nobody you wouldn't expect to see this time of day."

"Okay, boys," said Swenkert. "Lock him up. They cleaned up that cell where the wino tossed his cookies last night?"

"Not yet, Chief."

"Good. Furnish Mr. Fish with some rags and a bucket of water." Swenkert turned to Tom. "You don't have to clean up, Fish, but I have an idea you'll want to."

"Wait just one doggone minute," Tom shouted. "What are you charging me with? Where's the arraignment?"

"Shut your foul mouth," said Swenkert. "I don't have to listen to that kind of slimy talk."

"Wha-a-at? Look, let me call my lawyer."

"Get him out of my sight, boys."

"Damn it, I have rights, don't I? I want a lawyer."

"He wants a lawyer. I want Jayne Mansfield. It's a frustrating world we live in, Fish. Get him out, boys; get him out. He's curdling my breakfast."

Tom's cell was dark and vile-smelling. The previous occupant

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had done a masterful job of regurgitation, and there was no place you could go to avoid standing or sitting in it. Tom was given rags and a bucket full of grey water that had obviously been wrung out of a dirty mop. He could only stare at it, numbly bewildered.

Had the fruitcake hypnotized him into doing some monstrous thing? No. He was certain he could account for all of his time last night. Account to himself, that is. How could he prove to anyone else that he had spent the night pacing a barren Oregon plateau, listening to—yearning toward . . . absolutely nothing at all? Even if he could prove it, would they be any more inclined to let him out of his cage?

Somehow he would have to get word to Augie Rush, his lawyer and best friend. Swenkert would have to give in on this sooner or later. He was a tough cop and liked to show his muscle now and again, but now that he had had his bit of megalomaniac fun, he would certainly have to back down and admit that he wasn't really, after all, the law around here. Augie would find out what the charge was supposed to be, and maybe get a writ of habeas corpus. Maybe the crime he was supposed to have committed had taken place before midnight, in which case the fruitcake could alibi him, and that would be that.

One would think that they would at least get in touch with Marta. She had probably started worrying before dawn—note or no note. If Tom wasn't heard from by lunchtime, she would be ready for a strait-jacket.

Uppmann would be burning up by now, but to hell with that. Uppmann was a chronically angry man anyway. If he wasn't getting a hard time from his weird wife at home, he was getting it from the whimsical presses at the shop, and he had no one to unload his poison onto except his employees. Well, let Ivan go outside the shop for a change and take it out on the merchants who thought that by taking a one-column two-inch institutional ad every other month or so they were boosting freedom of the press in Squampus. Ivan was always unloading inspirational treatises on Tom: "How to put ZING in your Salesmanship," "The POSITIVE Approach to Sizzling Selling." That sort of thing. Okay; now was his chance to get an education, to sizzle and zing positively all over the Squampus business district and watch those advertising budgets dwindle.

Some time later—somewhere between ten minutes and two hours later, for all Tom could tell, or care—Junior came down with a wispy, bald-headed man in a brown tropical worsted business suit.

"We got a room-mate for you, Fish," said Junior. "Poor guy."

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Junior pushed the little man into the cell, relocked the door, and walked away, ostentatiously retching and holding his nose.

"Does stink some," said the little man.

"There's a pail of water and some rags, if you want to clean up."

"Guess I can get used to the *smell,*" said the little man. "It ain't the smell. It's the company."

"What are you talking about? I never saw you before in my life."

"Never seen you for that matter. It was a good life."

"What are you judging me for then? What am I supposed to have done?"

"Don't you try to trick me into using them words. I'd choke on them. Never did have no use for filthy talk."

"You're a moral paragon. What are you in for?"

"I'm what they call a sex criminal."

"At this hour of the morning?"

"That ain't what they got me for this time. It was poisoning dogs. First time they ever caught me for that. You should of took it up. Would of kept your mind off all that nasty stuff."

"What nasty stuff? Please tell me."

"You shut your dirty mouth. You keep away from me too. One step and I'll holler. I ain't gonna look at you if I can help it, but I'll hear you if you take a step."

The little man turned his back on Tom, who moved as far from his cellmate as space allowed, then slumped down onto the steel bench and buried his face in his hands.

Melanicus. Melanicus. Vast poised thing, black as a crow, over the moon.

There was the sound of a gusty laugh from the direction of the chief's office, and suddenly the cell seemed full of sunlight. Augie Rush! They had notified him after all, and due process of law was chugging and grinding along in the fine old-fashioned way. Gargantuan Augie, guzzler and gourmand, student of everything from Xenophon to Einstein; for all his bulk and tendency to belch in public, he was a true gladiator in a courtroom or police station; if he didn't always take cases he believed in, he invariably believed in the cases he took, and nine times out of ten he won them. He and Tom had become friends when Augie was county attorney and in political hot water. Augie's only error had been corpulence; a fat man in politics is an easier scapegoat than a Gary Cooper. Tom had gone to bat for Augie and had saved his reputation if not his reelection. Since then the two had been fellow-trenchermen, fellow philosophers, and occasionally, in subtle matters of town or county politics, fellow-conspirators.

Tom stood up. Augie ap-

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proached the barred door of his cell, chuckling at something Junior was telling him.

"Thanks for coming, Augie," said Tom. "Maybe now we can make some sense out of this mess."

The smile disappeared from Augie's face.

"Listen, Fish, and listen carefully," he said. "I'm going to make this quick, because I don't want to spend any more time in your presence than I actually have to. I'm representing Marta. She doesn't want to see you again or even hear your name if she can possibly avoid it. Don't under any circumstances try to communicate with her or with the children."

"But Augie, this is crazy. What am I charged with?"

"You have a mouth like a cesspool, Fish. I came here to deliver a message, not to be subjected to your verbal spatterings. I trust you got my message straight."

"Does Marta want a divorce?"

"That would be a mere legal technicality, Fish. The gallows is as effective as a divorce court, and a widow stands higher in small town society than a divorcee. Of course you have muddied Marta's name somewhat but time will wash that away."

"Augie . . . Augie. This is—this is the goddamndest injustice I ever heard of. I haven't done a thing. I swear."

"Swear away, Fish. You're good at that."

"I've got to have a lawyer. I'm entitled to one, aren't I?"

"Not this lawyer. Oh, I suppose they'll furnish you with a public defender . . . if they can dig up someone who has no reputation to lose. In my opinion that sort of thing is just a nuisance. The simple solution in your case would be a lynch mob. I'll suggest that to Swenkert."

"Boy, you guys are going to be sorry when this thing is cleared up —whatever the hell it is."

"Shut up, Fish. You have nothing to say to me."

Just then Augie caught sight of the little bald man in the tropical worsted suit.

"Why it's Mr. Dilley," he said. "What are you in for? Impairing the morals of a minor child again?"

"Not this time, Mr. Rush. I got caught poisoning dogs."

"Good for you. Why don't you operate in my neighborhood. Several of my neighbors have dogs in need of poisoning."

"You're a sketch, Mr. Rush."

"I couldn't be more serious, Mr. Dilley. However, I don't think that would be quite the tack to take in court. Do you have legal representation? I'll be happy to take your case."

"I don't have no money, Mr. Rush."

"Money? Don't be crass, Mr. Dilley. I charge a fee only when legal drudgery is involved."

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"Why, gee. Sure. Thanks a million, Mr. Rush."

"I have to go to my office now. I'll be back in an hour or so with a writ of habeas corpus."

"Wait a minute, Augie," said Tom. "Just tell me one thing before you go."

"Make it short, Fish."

"Do I remind you of Deadeye Dick in 'H.M.S. Pinafore'?"

"A flip sonofabitch, aren't you?" said Augie. He turned his back and walked away.

The day dragged on. Lunch consisted of some kind of grey hash. Tom saw a cigarette butt in Mr. Dilley's hash. Poking through his own, he found no butt, but two burnt paper matches. He pushed his plate aside. Mr. Dilley, however, cleaned his plate with gusto, cigarette butt and all.

Right after lunch, Augie reappeared with a writ of habeas corpus for Mr. Dilley.

"You mean I can run loose?" asked the little man.

"You've got to come to police court Monday night. Keep in touch with me; you're more or less in my custody. And, Mr. Dilley."

"Yeah?"

"Watch it on the dog poisoning between now and Monday night."

"That's all right. I had some poison out this morning, but I sent my kid to bring it all in the house when the cops came for me. It ain't no fun if you can't be there to watch the dog."

"I see your point."

Augie and Mr. Dilley went away without saying a word to Tom.

It was beginning to get dark when the fruitcake came, accompanied by Chief Swenkert.

"Hi, fruitcake," said Tom, dismally.

"You let him call you that?" asked Swenkert.

"Ordinarily it delights me," said the fruitcake. "All of the disciples of Charles Fort were called fruitcakes . . . by Fort himself. I am one of those disciples, and I accept the appellation not only with delight, but with some humility. Ordinarily, that is. At the moment it sounds singularly offensive."

"If you want to go in there and belt him one, professor, I'll hold him for you."

"I happen to be privy to certain knowledge that you don't possess, Chief," said the fruitcake. "That is why it surprises me that I should find your offer tempting. Nevertheless, with what I do know, I mustn't even entertain the idea of belting him one. May I be left alone with the prisoner for a moment or two?"

"Okay. Don't get too close to the bars. He might reach out and grab you. He's a mean one."

"All right, Mr. Fish," said the fruitcake, after the Chief had gone. "You'll have to turn your back. I knew, when I heard that you were in jail, that I would find

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it difficult not to loathe you. I didn't know that I would find it next to impossible. However, it may help if I don't have to look at your face."

"How did you find out I was here?"

"I made inquiries. I was worried about you, strange as it seems to me right now, when you left my place. You seemed on edge, and I suspected you were not going to take my advice and go straight to bed. Not that I had any feeling of responsibility, you understand. On your head be it."

"On my head be what?"

"I think, if you have anything to say, you had better write it down. Your voice makes my flesh creep. Will you write down, briefly, where you went last night and what happened to you."

Tom wrote:

"I had the jitters so I drove to a high place over on the Oregon side to sit and think. I didn't do anything but watch the stars. This sounds nutty, but I had a feeling Melanicus was right over me and sort of calling to me, and the queer thing is, I wanted to go to it. But of course I couldn't. I came straight back to town at sunrise and walked into this mess. I swear to God I didn't do anything. They won't even tell me why they are holding me."

"They won't because they can't. Only—dear me; Melanicus. Do you take that stuff seriously?"

Tom wrote: "I never did. I thought you did."

"Charles Fort," the fruitcake said, "was not a propounder of truths; he was an architect of the preposterous. We will never know how many of his outlandish hypotheses he really believed in. I suspect very few; perhaps none. He was a tease. He collected roomsfull of data on recorded phenomena that the formal rationalists preferred to put out of their minds as quickly as possible, and he threw it in their faces, shouting: 'These things are absurd, impossible, but they happened. Explain them away. Explain them in your own pedestrian logical terms, and you can only arrive at preposterous hypotheses. Melanicus. Gelatinous heavens.' "

Tom wrote: "Why are you a Fortean then?"

"In the data he compiled, Fort saw hints pointing to new paths down which scientific inquiry must travel. Fort himself was too impatient, or perhaps too unlucky to go down those paths himself. That was why he indulged in his whimsical leaps of the imagination into utter absurdity. I take the hints he bequeathed us and go on from there to seek out those paths. I make no jumps. I am patient. When I am sure my feet are on the path, I plod along, step by step. I'm in luck today. Fort was never actually caught out in one of his showers of frogs or gouts of

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bleeding flesh, but I am here standing in the presence of a fished soul —a celestial rhesus monkey."

"This is fascinating for you," Tom wrote, "but not for me. I never was an anti-vivisectionist before, but that's only because I was never IT."

"Your petulant attitude disgusts me. As a matter of fact the back of your head disgusts me. No, no. Don't turn around. The *front* of your head *enrages* me. Listen to me, Mr. Fish: I'm going to try to get you out of your predicament. Not for your sake, you understand. That would be unthinkable under the present circumstances. We Forteans, like the ancient Greek scientists, are interested in paths of knowledge, not in practical applications. If my plan for your salvation works, you will shed your appalling aura of disagreeableness; I will again be able to regard you as an endurable, and even a rather likeable young man, and I will perhaps then congratulate myself on having performed a charitable act. Today, however, the only thing that impels me to close my ears to the indignant shrieks of my nature, and perform an act in behalf of an utter swine, is the belief that this act will move my mind farther along a particular path of knowledge."

Tom wrote: "Why won't you tell me why I'm an utter swine?"

"For the same reason that no one else will tell you. Perhaps tonight I will *learn* why, but I doubt it. I have never given up seeking reasons, but it is a poor habit, and by now I should have broken myself of it. There are reasons, but it is not in the nature of the human intellect to find them, or to make sense of them."

"What is this thing you are going to do for me?"

"Actually, Mr. Fish, you'll have to do it for yourself, under my tutelage. Let's go back to the fish analogy. 'We are being fished for.' It's not my favorite Fortean hypothesis, but it will do. Suppose a fish learned the trick of shrinking himself to a size smaller than the legal limit. Would that not be a happy fish?"

"An honest fisherman would throw him back." Tom underlined the word "honest."

"We will have to assume that our hypothetical fisherman is honest, or, if not honest in our sense of the word, sincerely disinterested in small fish. I have data which leads me to believe that this fisherman—Melanicus if you will—throws back fish that are small—or otherwise disappointing. I won't bore you with it. That was Fort's major defect. He could be an Olympian bore."

"The question is," wrote Tom, "How am I to make myself into a smaller fish. I imagine I am a pretty small fish to begin with. What in the devil did they or it want with me?"

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"They or it will never say. Ours not to reason why. There is about you, or was yesterday, a certain air of sincerity, of earnest curiosity. Other cases come to mind. Ambrose Bierce, for example. But never mind. Take my word for it. There is a dimly discernible pattern in these things. What I want you to do is become a pompous fraud. You are to return to that desert plateau in Oregon and speak tedious platitudes. Speak them proudly. Believe them. Force yourself to believe them. Be positive. Obnoxiously positive. Be so smug in your conviction of self-importance that your soul will shrivel and crouch like a tiny mouse. Remember, I told you last night that your soul should crouch. It may not be too late."

"How am I to get to Oregon?"

"It's all arranged. I told Chief Swenkert that I would persuade you to go to the scene of your crime and re-enact it. You see, he is puzzled. He doesn't know what to book you for. He has agreed, if you will do this, to let you drive there in your own car, accompanied by me and an armed patrolman. He will follow in the police car. When we are about 50 yards from your destination, Swenkert will find a place to conceal the police car, the patrolman and I will dismount from your car and go to join Swenkert, and you will proceed alone to the same place where you parked your car last night."

Tom wrote, "Isn't this pretty risky for you or for the cops. Suppose I am thrown back. Won't they or it be on the lookout for other fish."

"I'm not afraid for myself. I am devoid of *hubris*. Chief Swenkert, I think, has no soul. The patrolmen will be too busy keeping their high-powered rifles aimed at you to entertain any feelings of exaltation."

The fruitcake went up to tell Swenkert that Tom was ready to go through with the re-enactment. While he was gone, Tom combed through his memory for fatuous pomposities that he could deliver with a convincing swagger. Perhaps a few choice passages from "How to put ZING in Your Salesmanship," or "The POSITIVE Approach to Sizzling Selling."

POSITIVE. That was the tack. He would give them or it one of Uppmann's editorials. Don't be a knocker; be a booster. Let's take the word "negative" out of the dictionary. Think positive. Don't tear down; be constructive.

"I always wanted to debate that with Uppmann," he told the fruitcake, as he drove westward over the Boise valley, uneasily conscious of Junior, who sat directly behind him, holding a cocked and loaded revolver inches from the base of his skull. "This positive and constructive malarkey. The greatest documents in history were mainly negative. Take the Ten

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Commandments or the Magna Charta or the Bill of Rights. And the great men of history were destroyers. Social structures grow up spontaneously around people and wall them in, and then these heroes come along and tear them down or open up holes in them so people can go free. You don't construct to get freedom. You tear down."

"Remember I'm a family man," said Junior, "and I've got a gun. I don't have to listen to talk like that."

"Nor I," said the fruitcake. "Fish, you're a fool. It won't suffice merely to *talk* positively when you stand out there among the radio blips and chanting stars. You will be lured all over again, if you persist in this nonsense of indulging your own opinions. *Think* positively. Begin at once. Keep it up. All the way. Positive, positive, positive. Be an obnoxious clod. Make Melanicus retch."

When he stepped out of the car at last, seemingly alone with stars and sagebrush, the cosmic tingle came over him again.

"Vast black thing poised like a crow over the moon."

He had made the effort. Positive, positive, positive, but right now the pull of yearning overpowered him. He would fool them all: the fruitcake, Swenkert, everyone. He would offer himself.

Melanicus! Heart's lodestone!

He spread his arms upward.

Ka-pow! He heard the hum and felt the wind of the bullet passing his face.

Swenkert shouted, "I missed you on purpose, Fish. I've got a good rifle here, and I could put a hole right through your left eye if I wanted to. That was just a reminder of what will happen if you get funny."

"I told the chief to fire that shot," shouted the fruitcake.

Good fruitcake. Just in the nick of time. He felt an easing of the pull as his soul began to shrivel.

"I'm here to tell you right now," he shouted, "what this country needs is doers; not a bunch of saps who go out on the desert to moon at the stars. What kind of progress you think we'd have around here if it weren't for go-getters who think positive. What does negative mean? It means a shrinking violet attitude. It means cowardice in the face of the Challenge of the Future. Let's get rid of negative thinking. Let's get rid of the knockers. Let's all pull together CONSTRUCTIVELY and make Squampus maybe not the biggest, but, by God, the *doingest* little town in the Boise Valley, if not in the whole United States of America."

The music of the stars had become plaintive. Tom sensed an undertone of retching. He shook his fist upward.

"You up there. I'm telling you. Latch onto me and I promise you

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you're getting a number one go-getter, a guy who *gets things done!* A guy who says *yes* to life."

There was a whimper in the heavens, then a faint tinkling crash, like the sound of a Christmas tree ornament breaking.

Then silence.

The fruitcake called, "We're all going back in the police car, Mr. Fish. Drop by for a little chat one of these days."

"Stop by my office in the morning, Tom," said Swenkert. "I've got some items for your paper."

"See you, Tommy," called Junior, getting into the police car.

The sun was shining hot and bright when he got to Penney's in the morning. Jerry Bagg handed him the ad lay-out. A lousy 3 by 6.

"Something wrong with the ad, Tom?"

"I was sort of counting on a half-page this week."

"Oh, wait," said Jerry. "I gave you the wrong lay-out. That's for the Farm Journal. Here's the one for your paper. Mr. Appleton thought we'd go to full-page. You got the room?"

"Always," said Tom.

"Say, Tom, I heard a nifty the other day. Got time?"

"Not right now, Jerry. I'll see you later."

"Drop in to the Stockman after work, Tom. I'll buy you a beer."

Jerry had never bought anyone a beer in his life.

Uppmann was almost jovial at the sight of the ad.

"Better call your wife," he said pleasantly. "She's called here twice this morning."

"Oh, darling," said Marta on the phone. "I was positively frantic with worry. But you're all right, aren't you? Darling, darling; come home as soon as you can. Oh, by the way, Betty Rush called. She and Augie want us to come over for a few drinks tonight."

So yesterday had never happened. But people were so effusive. And . . . guilty?

"Marta, do you happen to remember a character named Deadeye Dick in Gilbert and Sullivan's 'H.M.S. Pinafore?' "

"I haven't read that one, darling. I'm going to the library this afternoon. Would you like me to pick it up for you? Darling?"

"Please do. I remember him slightly from my childhood, but it came on me all of a sudden last night that I never really knew him. That's part of the reason I couldn't sleep. I don't care if it *does* sound odd."

After hanging up the telephone, Tom Fish walked whistling down the street to pick up a couple of news items from his good and estimable friend, Chief Swenkert. ◄

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Those who say, with more vigor than originality, that if they want a message they can call Western Union, may object to this story of Mr. Tompkins, Mrs. Tompkins, and the rowk bird. Classical scholars may murmur or mutter something about panem et circenses. *And those who wish nothing more than to enjoy something short and which may pass for light can dig right in and dig this, too. Maybe multi-levelled is the word we are groping for. Tweet-tweet!*

DIALOGUE IN A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY DINING ROOM

by Robert F. Young

ORDINARILY, CONVERSATION IN the Tompkins apartmenage went something like this:

MR. TOMPKINS: In the cafeteria this noon I heard over Teevy that they've taken another one of those radical malcontents into custody.

MRS. TOMPKINS: They have? What was this one doing?

MR. TOMPKINS: The same thing as the others—going around saying mean things about ordinary people like us. This one said we've become 'a government-subsidized juggernaut of destruction bent on wiping every last vestige of truth and beauty from the face of the earth'. Can you imagine anyone having the nerve to make such a sarcastic remark? Why, the president himself said just the other day that if it wasn't for people like us faithfully going about our daily tasks and keeping our noses clean, the world would come apart at the seams!

MRS. TOMPKINS: And he's right, too. People like us are the salt of the earth, and if you ask me I think those malcontents are jealous of us. What should I dial for supper—baked ham or roast beef?

MR. TOMPKINS: If it wasn't for ordinary people like us keeping the boat steady, people like them would have overturned it long ago, and then where would everybody be? . . . Isn't there anything else on the menu besides baked ham and roast beef?

MRS. TOMPKINS: What's the

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matter with you, Arthur? You know today's Thursday and that on Thursday all apart-o-matic developments ever serve is baked ham and roast beef.

MR. TOMPKINS: That's right—I forgot. Roast beef then, I guess.

MRS. TOMPKINS: Baked or mashed potatoes?

MR. TOMPKINS: Mashed. While you're up, turn Teevy on, will you?

On the evening before the arrival of the Bartlett Bird, conversation in the Tompkins apartmenage went like this:

MR. TOMPKINS: I see by the paper that Grimbel's have got a big sale on Martian rowks. Seems they bought up a whole shipment of them so they could sell them at half price.

MRS. TOMPKINS: What's a rowk?

MR. TOMPKINS: You mean to tell me you don't know what a rowk is?

MRS. TOMPKINS: Sounds like some kind of crazy bird to me. What should I dial for supper—baked beans or chop suey?

MR. TOMPKINS: It's a talking bird, not a brazy bird. Something like a parrot, only smaller and a thousand times smarter—never forgets anything it hears. They have purple feathers and their breasts are covered with pink polka dots, and they sleep hanging upside down from their perches . . . Isn't there anything else on the menu besides baked beans and chop suey?

MRS. TOMPKINS: What's the matter with you, Arthur? You know today's Monday and that on Monday all apart-o-matic developments ever serve is baked beans and chop suey.

MR. TOMPKINS: That's right—I forgot. Baked beans then, I guess. Think we should buy one of them? I could stop in after work tomorrow afternoon.

MRS. TOMPKINS: Sure, why not—as long as they're on sale. It will give me somebody to talk to during the day while you're at work. Should I dial the beans with salt pork or with bacon?

MR. TOMPKINS: Salt pork. While you're up, turn Teevy on, will you?

MR. TOMPKINS: How come there's only one rowk left? The paper said you bought a whole shipment.

THE BIRD CLERK: Certainly we bought a whole shipment. You don't think Grimbel's would lie, do you?"

MR. TOMPKINS: Then how come there's only one left?

THE BIRD CLERK: What did you expect? The paper said 'sale', didn't it? Why, with all the people coming in here today and buying rowks like crazy, you're lucky there *is* one left.

MR. TOMPKINS (pointing to

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the feathered occupant of a lone cage standing on the counter): If you had so many people buying them, how come nobody bought *that* one?

THE BIRD CLERK: Because we of Grimbel's, being honest people, couldn't in all honesty put that particular one up for sale till all the others were gone. It was overexposed—probably by one of the members of the crew of the Mars-Earth freighter that brought the shipment in, to some book-tapes. Mr. Grum, our book-tape department consultant, wasn't able to identify the tapes positively, but he is of the opinion that one of them must have been Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations.*

MR. TOMPKINS (wisely): I'm familiar with that one. It's about pears, isn't it?

THE BIRD CLERK: Not according to Mr. Grum. According to him, it's a collection of old poems and sayings. You've heard of 'walking encyclopoedias', haven't you? Well this rowk here is a sort of 'flying encyclopoedia', if you know what I mean, only instead of being filled with useful facts and figures, it's filled with a lot of impractical words and phrases. Say something to it, and you'll see what I mean.

MR. TOMPKINS (*facing the cage*): Pretty boy.

THE BARTLETT BIRD: 'Blessings on thee, little man, Barefoot boy with cheeks of tan!'

THE BIRD CLERK: There, you see? It doesn't repeat things the way it's supposed to—it comes back with something original.

MR. TOMPKINS: Gimmee a kiss, pretty boy.

THE BARTLETT BIRD: 'Jenny kissed me when we met, Jumping from the chair she sat in!'

MR. TOMPKINS (*gaping*): Who's Jenny?

THE BIRD CLERK: Search me. Look, just before you came in, the floor manager gave me the authority to knock off twenty percent on this one, so if you want it you can have it for four fifths of the regular price—plus the price of the cage, of course.

MR. TOMPKINS (*dubiously*): I don't know . . .

THE BIRD CLERK: Twenty-five percent off.

MR. TOMPKINS: Well . . .

THE BIRD CLERK: Fifty percent, and that's as low as I can go.

MR. TOMPKINS: You've made a sale.

THE BIRD CLERK: And you, sir, have made a bargain.

THE BARTLETT BIRD: 'But in the way of bargain, mark ye me, I'll cavil on the ninth part of a hair!'

On the evening of the Bartlett Bird's arrival, conversation in the Tompkins apartmenage went like this:

MRS. TOMPKINS: I see you got one. Did it say anything yet?

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MR. TOMPKINS (*closing the door and setting the cage on a nearby table*): It's said plenty, but none of it amounted to very much. It's a Bartlett bird.

MRS. TOMPKINS: A Bartlett bird! I thought you were going to get a rowk.

MR. TOMPKINS (*removing his coat and sitting down beside her on the viewing couch*): It is a rowk. But it got overexposed to a bunch of book-tapes, and every time you say something to it, it comes back with part of a poem or a saying.

MRS. TOMPKINS: Well all I got to say is, they saw you coming.

MR. TOMPKINS: But I saw them first. I got it for a song.

MRS. TOMPKINS: But what good is it if you can't teach it to talk?

MR. TOMPKINS: Oh, I'll teach it to talk all right. Just give me time.

MRS. TOMPKINS: Imagine, a bird trying to be different from other birds. Just who does it think it is! What should I dial for supper—pork chops or liver?

MR. TOMPKINS: It's not really trying to be different. It just got overexposed, like I said.

MRS. TOMPKINS: It's the same difference.

MR. TOMPKINS: How come pork chops and liver again? Seems to me they were on the menu just the other day.

MRS. TOMPKINS: Oh, they were not, Arthur! They haven't been on the menu for a whole week. The way you talk, sometimes I think you're getting to be one of those radical malcontents who think our civilization isn't good enough for them!

MR. TOMPKINS (*hastily*): Pork chops.

MRS. TOMPKINS: Wheat bread or white?

MR. TOMPKINS: White.

THE BARTLETT BIRD: 'Bread and circuses! Bread and circuses!'

MR. TOMPKINS: Little bird, it's high time somebody brought you up to date.

THE BARTLETT BIRD (*hopping up and down on its perch*): *Epigoni! Epigoni!*

MRS. TOMPKINS: Now it's calling us pigs.

MR. TOMPKINS: It said '*epigoni*', not 'pigs'.

MRS. TOMPKINS: '*Epigoni*'? What's that?

MR. TOMPKINS: I don't know—it's Greek to me.

MRS. TOMPKINS (*sniffing*): Some bird! Can't even speak plain English.

MR. TOMPKINS: Just you wait till after supper—I'll teach it some good old plain English!

MRS. TOMPKINS (*getting up and going over to the dial-o-meal*): You'd better!

Later:

MR. TOMPKINS (*setting his empty plate on the serve-o-matic supper table and facing the Bart-*

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lett Bird's cage): And now, little bird, it's time for your first lesson.

THE BARTLETT BIRD: '"The time has come," the Walrus said, "to talk of many things—"'

MRS. TOMPKINS (*re-activating the serve-o-matic supper table and sending it rolling back into the serve-o-lift whence it had come*): Ha ha.

MR. TOMPKINS: Shut up! (*To the Bartlett Bird*): If you know what's good for your own welfare, little bird, you'll straighten up in a hurry, and start flying right!

THE BARTLETT BIRD: 'It is strange to see with what feverish ardor the Americans pursue their own welfare, and to watch the vague dread that constantly torments them lest they should not have chosen the shortest path which may lead to it.'

MR. TOMPKINS: Now see here!

THE BARTLETT BIRD: 'The sea of faith Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd . . .'

MRS. TOMPKINS (*laughing*): Who's teaching who?

THE BARTLETT BIRD: 'Ah, love, let us be true To One another, for the world, which seems—'

MR. TOMPKINS: I'll show it! I'll wring its confounded neck!

THE BARTLETT BIRD: 'To lie before us like a land of dreams—'

MRS. TOMPKINS: You'll do nothing of the sort. We're going to get our money's worth out of it if it takes all year!

THE BARTLETT BIRD: 'So various, so beautiful, so new—'

MR. TOMPKINS: But how?

THE BARTLETT BIRD: 'Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light—'

MRS. TOMPKINS: I'll think of something.

THE BARTLETT BIRD: 'Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain—'

MRS. TOMPKINS: Meanwhile, why don't you cover its cage and I'll turn on Teevy.

THE BARTLETT BIRD: 'And we are here as on a darkling plain —'

MR. TOMPKINS (*unfolding the cover*): Good idea.

THE BARTLETT BIRD: 'Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight—'

MRS. TOMPKINS (*pausing halfway to the television set*): Teevy! Why, that's it, Arthur—that's it!

THE BARTLETT BIRD: 'Where ignorant armies clash by night!'

MR. TOMPKINS (*covering the cage*): What's it?

MRS. TOMPKINS: Don't you see? If it got the way it is from being overexposed to book-tapes, maybe it can be cured by being overexposed to Teevy. Every night before we go to bed we can set the cage in front of the speaker and turn on one of those all-night programs. Or we can use the radio, for that matter.

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MR. TOMPKINS: H'm'm.
MRS. TOMPKINS: Well it's certainly worth trying, isn't it? After all, you can't take the bird back, and it's no good the way it is.
MR. TOMPKINS (*with sudden decision*): All right, we'll do it!

On the morning after the Bartlett Bird's arrival, conversation in the Tompkins apartmenage went like this:
MRS. TOMPKINS: What should I dial for breakfast? Eggs or cereal?
MR. TOMPKINS: Cereal.
MRS. TOMPKINS: I wonder if the treatment did any good.
MR. TOMPKINS (*going over to the cage, uncovering it, and peering inside*): Pretty boy.
THE BARTLETT BIRD: 'Blessings on thee' . . . 'Blessings on thee' . . .
MRS. TOMPKINS: See?—it's starting to forget!
MR. TOMPKINS: Gimmee a kiss, pretty boy.
THE BARTLETT BIRD (*blinking rapidly*): Jenny . . . chuk-chuk . . . 'Try lipsnack, the protein-packed lipstick. Gives you pep while you pet—The most energized kiss-snack yet!'
MRS. TOMPKINS: See?
THE BARTLETT BIRD: 'The sea of . . . of . . .'
MR. TOMPKINS: I'll tell you what. Turn up the volume and keep it before the Teevy all day. By tonight, it ought to be cured.
MRS. TOMPKINS: We'll get our money's worth out of it yet! Just leave the whole thing to me.
MR. TOMPKINS: Hurry up with breakfast, or I'll be late for work.
MRS. TOMPKINS (*dialing*): Do you want toast with your cereal or rolls?
MR. TOMPKINS: Rolls.

On the evening after the Bartlett Bird's arrival, conversation in the Tompkins apartmenage went like this:
MR. TOMPKINS (*closing the door and taking off his coat*): Well, how did it work?

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MRS. TOMPKINS: Fine. The poor thing's still a little mixed up, but it won't be long before it's back to normal. I've been teaching it the wolf whistle, and it's almost got it down pat.

MR. TOMPKINS (*going over to the cage and peering inside*): Pretty boy.

THE BARTLETT BIRD: 'Blessings on thee' . . . 'Blessings on thee' . . . Pretty boy! Pretty boy! Pretty boy!

MRS. TOMPKINS: Quite an improvement, wouldn't you say?

MR. TOMPKINS (*sitting down beside her on the viewing couch*): Well I guess so!

MRS. TOMPKINS: What should I dial for supper—sauerkraut and frankfurters or spaghetti and meat balls?

MR. TOMPKINS: Seems to me—

MRS. TOMPKINS: We didn't have either one for a whole week! Honestly, Arthur, sometimes you act as though you don't appreciate this wonderful world we're living in! Would you like to go back to the dark ages when ordinary people like us had to shift for themselves and didn't have government-subsidized jobs to work at and government-subsidized apart-o-matic developments to live and eat in? When 'welfare' was a dirty word? Would you, Arthur? Would you?

MR. TOMPKINS (*guiltily*): Of course not. Spaghetti and meat balls, I guess . . . Did you keep the rowk exposed to Teevy all day like I told you to?

MRS. TOMKINS: Every minute. It just goes to show you that you've got to use your head, doesn't it? Why, we almost got stuck with something worthless, and just by applying a little common sense we turned it into something worthwhile. Do you want white or rye?

MR. TOMPKINS: Rye.

THE BARTLETT BIRD (*blinking furiously*): Bread and . . . bread and . . . *tweet-tweet! Tweet-tweet!*

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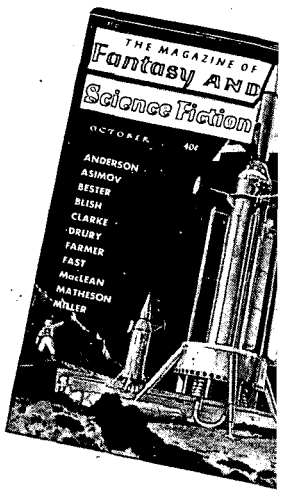

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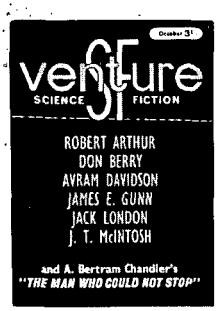

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